







PEOPLE'S EDITION.

THE  
LIFE OF JESUS

BY  
ERNEST RÉNAN

MEMBER OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY



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## PREFACE.

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SINCE to me it has been given, to trace an image of Jesus that has attracted some attention I believe it to be my duty to present that image in a conveniently prepared form, to the poor, to the afflicted of the world, to those whom Jesus loved the most. Many persons having regretted that the book, in consequence of its price and size, was not accessible to all, I have sacrificed the Introduction, the Notes, and certain passages in the Text with which the reader, tolerably versed in special critical researches, is presumed to be acquainted. By the suppression of these different parts, a threefold end has been attained: First, the book has assumed such a modest form, that any person who cares for it can possess it; second, I do ~~not~~ believe that it contains a word or a phrase which, in order to be perfectly understood, requires preliminary study; finally, by the abridgment, I have obtained a result which is to me not less valuable. I have written my book with the cold candour of a historian, with the single aim of discovering the finest and most exact shades of truth. This candidness could not fail but cause some irritation to many of my excellent friends, who have been educated and nurtured in Christianity. More than once I have regretted to see some people, whom it would have been an infinite delight to please, turn from reading a book, some of whose pages might perhaps have proved to them at once agreeable and profitable. I am of opinion, that many true Christians will not find in this little volume anything to offend them. Without a single change, as far as I can see, I have been able to suppress all the passages which were calculated to produce misapprehensions, or which would require long explanations.

History, like Chemistry or Geology, is a science. To be properly understood, it requires the most profound study, the highest result of which is to know how to appreciate different times, countries, nations, and races. To-day a man who believes in ghosts, or sorcerers, is not regarded by us as a serious man. But, formerly, there were eminent men who believed in all these, and, perhaps, in certain countries it is still possible, in our day, to ally real superiority with similar errors. Persons who have not succeeded, either by travel, by extensive reading, or by great mental penetration, in explaining those differences, find always something which shocks in the

records of the past ; for past ages, so heroic, so grand, so original, had not, upon certain very important points, the same notions as we have. Complete history cannot recoil before that difficulty, even at the risk of provoking the gravest mistakes. Scientific truth does not know convenient falsehoods. There is not in this world a motive sufficiently strong to induce a savant to restrain himself in the expression of that which he believes to be the truth. Yet, when one has once announced, without a shade of *arrière-pensée*, that which one believes certain or probable or possible, is it not allowable to abandon at that point subtle distinctions, in order to devote oneself entirely to the general spirit of great matters, which every one might and ought to comprehend ? Has not one the right to strike out dissonances in order to dream only of the poetry and the edification which abound in those old records ? The chemist knows that the diamond is only charbon ; he knows the means by which nature makes these great transformations. Is he obliged, on this account, to interdict himself from speaking out like the rest of the world, and to see in the most beautiful jewel only a simple piece of charbon ?

This then is not a new book. It is the "Life of Jesus," stripped of its scaffoldings and its obscurities. To be a historian, I have had to try to paint a Christ who possessed the characteristics, the colour, and the physiognomy of his race. Now, it is a Christ in white marble that I present to the public ; a Christ cut from a block without blemish ; a Christ simple and pure as the sentiment which created him. My God ! perhaps he is thus more true ! Who knows whether there are not some moments when all that proceeds from man is immaculate ? These moments, it is true, are not long ; but there are some such. It is thus, at least, that Jesus appeared to the people ; it is thus, that the people saw and loved him ; it is thus, that he abides in the hearts of men. This is what has lived in him, what has charmed the world and created his immortality. •

I shall not refute for the twentieth time the reproach which has been levelled at me of striking a blow at religion. Certain persons imagine that, by a discreet silence, one may prevent people from losing faith in the supernatural. Even though such a precaution were honest, it were most useless. Now the people have lost it. People, who are in accord with positive science, do not admit the special supernatural, the miracle. Must it be concluded hence, that they are strangers to the exalted beliefs which constitute the nobility of man ? That would be a grave error. Every nation is religious in its own way. What can be more touch-

ing than Christ's respect for death? His courage, his serenity, his desire to instruct, his indifference to ridicule, his grand heroic instincts, his taste for works of art or of poetry—a taste which induces serious emotions, and addresses itself to noble sentiments—that perpetual youth which shines in him when the question is one of glory or of country—all that is religion, and of the highest order. The world is by no means materialistic. It is pleased by idealism. Its defect, if it be one, is of holding all other interests too cheap when it is moved by an idea. It would be disastrous to preach to it irreligion; it would be useless to attempt to revert to the old supernatural beliefs. One single resource remains, which is to tell the people everything. The world eagerly seizes, by a sort of profound instinct, the most learned results of science. It sees that, amongst the religious forms which have existed up to the time, none of them can pretend to absolute perfection; but it also feels deeply that the foundation of religion has nevertheless not been shaken. To inspire in it even respect for forms which have passed away; to point out to it the grandeur of history; to show in relief what those antique forms have had, of good and of holy—is not that performing a pious act? For my part I think that the world should turn its back to its deliverance, the day when it shall hold chimeras as its faith, abnegation, devotion. The form of illusions which formerly was mixed up with all great movements, whether political or religious, is not a reason for refusing to those movements our sympathy and admiration. One can be a good Frenchman without believing in the sacred ampulla. One can believe in Joan d'Arc, without admitting the reality of her visions.

This is why I have thought that the description of the most astonishing popular revolution, of which we have any record, would be useful to the world. It is indeed, the life of its best friend. The whole of the epoch of the Christian origins is the history of the grandest plebeians that the world has ever had. Jesus loved the poor, hated the rich and worldly priests, recognised the existing government as a necessity; he boldly placed moral concerns above the quarrels of parties; he taught that this world was but a dream; that everything here below is but type and form; that the true kingdom of God was the ideal; that the ideal belonged to all. That legend is a living source of eternal consolation; it inspires a sweet cheerfulness; it encourages the amelioration of manners without vain hypocrisy; it gives a foretaste of liberty; it leads, finally, to reflection upon the social problems which are the foremost of our times. Jesus unfolded upon that point views of astonishing

profoundness. When one has emerged from his school one sees clearly that politics ought not to be a frivolous game. That the essential theory in life is to labour for the happiness, the enlightenment and the virtue of men, that every effort made to put aside such questions was stamped with sterility.

Humble men-servants and maid-servants of God, who bear the burden and heat of the day ; workmen who labour with your hands to build the temple, which we have raised by the spirit ; priests, truly saints, who groan silently under the domination of arrogant Sadducees ; poor women who suffer from a social state in which their share of wealth is still meagre ; pious and resigned workmen at the bottom of cold cells, where the Saviour is with you, come to the feast that God, one day in his kindness, has prepared for the simple of heart. You are the true disciples of Jesus. Should that great Master return, where, think you, would he recognise the true posterity, that simple and faithful band, which surrounded him on the banks of the Lake of Genesareth ? Would it be among the defenders of symbols that he did not recognise, in an official church that encourages every thing that he fought against, among the partisans of old ideas identifying his cause with their interests and with their passions ? No ! it would be amongst us who love truth, progress, and liberty. And if, one day, he should arm himself with a whip to drive out the hypocrites, amongst whom, think you, would he recognise the Pharisee of his parable ? Amongst those who said : " God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican ; " or amongst those who said : " O Thou, whom I perhaps do not know, but whom I love, and who ought to receive above all the homage of a sincere heart, reveal thyself, for what I do wish is to see Thee."

Consider the heavens : one perceives there the breaking of the dawn, the deliverance through resignation, labour, goodness, reciprocal support ; the deliverance through science, which, penetrating the laws of humanity and subduing more and more matter, has established the dignity of all men and of true liberty. Let us, each doing his duty, prepare for that paradise of the future. For myself, I shall be happy, if for one moment, by these records of the past, I have made you forget the present, if I have revived for you the sweetness of that unparalleled idyll, which, eighteen hundred years ago, entranced with joy some humble people like yourselves.

E. R.

# RENAN'S LIFE OF JESUS.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE INFANCY AND YOUTH OF JESUS; HIS FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

THE principal event in the history of the world is the revolution by which the noblest portions of humanity have passed from the ancient religions, comprised under the vague name of Paganism, to a religion founded on the Divine Unity, the Trinity, and the Incarnation of the Son of God. To accomplish this conversion nearly a thousand years have been required. It had taken at least three hundred years to form the new religion itself. But the origin of the revolution in question is a fact which took place under the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius. At that period there lived a superior personage who, by his bold originality and by the love he knew how to inspire, established himself as the object, and fixed the starting-point, of the future faith of mankind.

Jesus was born at Nazareth, a small town of Galilee which had no fame before his time. During all his life he was designated by the name of "the Nazarene," and it is only by a puzzling enough evasion that, in the legends concerning him, it can be shown that he was born at Bethlehem. We shall see later the motive for this supposition, and how it was the necessary consequence of the character attributed to Jesus. The precise date of his birth is



not known. It took place during the reign of Augustus, about 750 of the Roman year, probably some years before the first of that era which all civilized nations date from—the day he was born.

The population of Galilee was very mixed. This province reckoned amongst its inhabitants, in the time of Jesus, many who were not Jews (Phœnicians, Syrians, Arabs, and even Greeks). The conversions to Judaism were not rare in mixed countries like this. It is therefore impossible to raise any question of race here, or to try to discover what blood flowed in the veins of him who has most of any contributed to efface the distinctions of blood in humanity.

He sprang from the ranks of the people. His father Joseph and his mother Mary were of humble position, artisans living by their work, in that condition which is so common in the East, and which is neither ease nor poverty. The extreme simplicity of life in such countries, by dispensing with the need of comfort, renders the privileges of the wealthy almost useless, and makes every one voluntarily poor. On the other hand, the total absence of taste for art and for that which tends to the elegance of material life, gives a naked aspect to the house of the man who otherwise wants for nothing. The town of Nazareth, in the time of Jesus, did not perhaps much differ from what it is today. The streets where he played as a child we can see in the stony paths or in the little cross-ways which separate the dwellings. The house of Joseph no doubt closely resembled those poor shops, lighted by the door, serving as a place for the bench, as kitchen, and as bedroom, the furniture consisting of a mat, some cushions on the ground, one or two earthenware pots, and a painted chest.

The family, whether it proceeded from one or several marriages, was rather numerous. Jesus had

brothers and sisters, of whom he appears to have been the eldest. All of these have remained obscure, for it would seem that the four personages who were styled his brothers, and among whom one at least—James—had acquired great importance in the first years of the development of Christianity, were his consins-german. Mary, in fact, had a sister likewise named Mary, who married a certain Alpheus or Cleophas (these two names appear to refer to the same person), and was the mother of several sons who played a considerable part among the first disciples of Jesus. Those consins-german, who adhered to the young Master, while his own brothers were opposed to him, took the title of “brothers of the Lord.” The real brothers of Jesus, like their mother, did not attain importance till after his death. Even then they do not seem to have been held in equal consideration with their cousins, whose conversion had been more spontaneous, and whose character appears to have possessed more originality.

The sisters of Jesus married at Nazareth, and there he, too, passed the first years of his life. Nazareth was a little town situated in a hollow, which opened widely at the summit of the group of mountains that closes in the plain of Esdraelon on its north side. The population at the present time is from three to four thousand souls, and it can never have changed much. In winter the cold is keen, and the climate very healthy. The village, like all small Jewish towns at that period, was a collection of dwellings built without style, and would present that hard, poor aspect which villages in Oriental countries now exhibit.

The houses, as it would appear, did not differ much from those cubes of stone, without either exterior or interior elegance, which still cover the richest portions of the Lebanon, and which, en-

bowered in vines and fig-trees, are yet very pleasing to the eye. The environs, moreover, are charming; and no spot in the world was so well adapted for dreams of perfect happiness. Even in our times Nazareth is a delightful residence, the only place, perhaps, in Palestine where the mind feels itself relieved from the burden which oppresses it in the midst of such unequalled desolation. The people are amiable and cheerful; the gardens are fresh and green. Anthony the Martyr, at the close of the sixth century, drew an enchanting picture of the fruitfulness of the environs, which he compares to Paradise; and certainly some valleys on the western side fully justify his description. The fountain, where the life and gaiety of the little town was once concentrated, is destroyed; its broken channels convey nothing now save a muddy stream. But the beauty of the women who assemble there in the evening—that beauty which had been remarked so early as the sixth century, and which was looked on as a gift of the Virgin Mary—has been preserved in a striking manner. It is the Syrian type in all its peculiar languid grace. No doubt Mary was at the village fountain nearly every day, and took her place, with her jar on her shoulder, in a line with her companions who have remained unknown. Anthony the Martyr remarks that the Jewish women, elsewhere scornful to Christians, are here quite affable. Even at the present day religious animosities are less bitter in Nazareth than in other places in Palestine.

The horizon from the town is limited; but, if one ascends a little and reaches the plateau, swept by a perpetual breeze, the prospect is splendid. On the west, the fine outlines of Carmel are unfolded, and these terminate in an abrupt point which appears to plunge into the sea. Then there spread out before us the double summit which towers over Megiddo,

the mountains of the country of Shechem with their holy places of the patriarchal age, the hills of Gilboa, that small picturesque group to which are attached the reminiscences, at once pleasant and terrible, of Shuncin and Endor; and Tabor with its graceful rounded form, which antiquity has compared to a bosom. Through a depression between the mountains of Shunem and Tabor, may be seen the valley of the Jordan and the high plains of the Peræa, which form an unbroken line from the eastern side. On the north, the mountains of Safed, by inclining towards the sea, hide from view St. Jean d'Acre, but they reveal the Gulf of Khaifa.

Such was the horizon within which Jesus lived. This enchanted circle, the cradle of the kingdom of God, was for years the world to him. Even in his future life he wandered only a short distance from the familiar limits of his childhood. For yonder, northward, one can obtain a glimpse, almost on the side of Hermon, of Cæsarea-Philippi, his most advanced point in the Gentile world, and here, southwards, there may be discovered behind these yet less smiling hills of Samaria, the sombre Judæa, parched as by a scorching wind of desolation and death.

If ever the world, while remaining Christian, but having reached a better idea of the proper regard in which the sources of that religion ought to be held, should wish to replace by authentic holy places those miserable apocryphal sanctuaries to which the piety of the dark ages clung, it would certainly be upon this height of Nazareth that the temple should be reared. There, on the threshold of Christianity, and in the centre of the actions of its founder, that great church where all Christians might worship ought to be built. There also, on this hallowed ground where sleep Joseph the carpenter and thousands of forgotten Nazarenes,

who never wandered beyond the horizon of their own valley, the philosopher would take up the best possible position on the surface of the globe, from which to contemplate the course of human affairs, to comfort himself in their uncertainty, and to reassure his mind regarding the Divine goal to which the world is pressing through innumerable failures, and in spite of a universal vanity.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE EDUCATION OF JESUS.

SUCH natural surroundings, at once smiling and grand, formed the whole education of Jesus. He learned to read and write, no doubt, in the Eastern fashion, which consist in putting within a child's hand a book out of which he repeats in a kind of measure with his little companions, till he knows it by heart. The master of the school in the little Jewish village was the *hazzan*, or reader in the synagogue. Jesus did not much frequent the more advanced schools of the scribes (Nazareth perhaps had none of them), and he certainly did not possess any of those titles which confer in the eyes of the vulgar the privileges of learning. Yet it would be a great mistake to imagine that Jesus was what we term ignorant. Scholastic education among us always draws a deep distinction, in respect of personal worth, between those who have received and those who have been deprived of it. This was not so in the East, nor even generally in the good old times. The state of ignorance in which, among ourselves, as a consequence of our isolated and wholly individual life, the person remains who has

not passed through the schools, was unknown in those societies where moral culture, and, above all, the general spirit of the age, was transmitted by the constant intercourse between men of all kinds. The Arab, who has never had a teacher, is notwithstanding that, a decidedly superior man; for the tent is a sort of academy always open, where from meeting with well-educated people, very considerable intellectual and even literary movement is produced. Refinement of manners and acuteness of intellect have, in the East, nothing in common with what we call education. The men of the schools, on the contrary, are those who pass for pedantic and badly-trained people. In this social state, ignorance, which among us at once relegates a man to an inferior grade, is the condition of great things and of great originality.

It is not at all likely that Jesus knew Greek. This language had spread only to a small extent in Judæa beyond the classes who participated in the government, and the towns which were inhabited by Pagans, like Cæsarea. The mother-tongue of Jesus was the Syrian dialect mixed with Hebrew, which was spoken in Palestine at that time. There is even greater reason to conclude that he knew nothing of Greek culture. This was indeed proscribed by the doctors of Palestine, who included in the same malediction "the man who breeds swine, and the person who teaches his son Greek science." At all events, it had not penetrated to little towns like Nazareth. At Jerusalem itself Greek was very little studied; indeed, Greek studies were considered to be dangerous, and even servile; at the best they were held to be only an effeminate accomplishment. The study of the Law stood alone as "liberal," and worthy of a thoughtful man. When he was asked as to the time when it would be right to teach children "Greek wisdom," a learned Rabbi

replied: "At the time which is neither day nor night; for it is written of the Law, Thou shalt study *it* day and night."

It seems clear, therefore, that neither directly nor indirectly did any element of "profane" culture reach Jesus. He knew nothing beyond Judaism; his mind preserved that free innocence which is invariably weakened by an extended and varied culture. In the very bosom of this Judaism he remained a stranger to many efforts somewhat parallel to his own. On the one hand, the devoted lives of the Essenes or Therapeutæ; on the other, the fine efforts of religious philosophy made by the Jewish school of Alexandria, of which Philo, his contemporary, was the ingenious interpreter, were alike unknown to him. The frequent resemblances which may be discovered between himself and Philo, those excellent maxims concerning the love of God, of charity, and rest in God, which sound like an echo between the Gospel and the illustrious Alexandrian thinker, arise from the common tendencies which the demands of the age inspired in all lofty minds.

Happily for him, he was also ignorant of the strange scholasticism which was taught at Jerusalem, and which soon was to form the Talmud. If some Pharisees had already brought it into Galilee, Jesus did not associate with them, and when later he met this silly casuistry face to face, it only inspired him with disgust. We may believe, however, that the principles of Hillel were not unknown to him. This Rabbi, fifty years before him, had uttered certain aphorisms which were almost analogous to his own. By his poverty so meekly borne, by the sweetness of his character, by the antagonism in which he stood to priests and hypocrites, Hillel was the true master of Jesus, if it may be allowed that one should speak of a master in connection with such a lofty originality as his.

His perusal of the books of the Old Testament made a deep impression on Jesus. The canon of the holy books was composed of two principal parts—the Law, that is to say, the Pentateuch, and the Prophets, such as we possess them now. An extensive and allegorical method of interpretation was applied to all these books; and the attempt was made to draw from them what was a response to the aspirations of the age. But the true poetry of the Bible which escaped the doctors of Jerusalem disclosed itself beautifully to the fine genius of Jesus. The law does not seem to have had much charm for him; he believed he could accomplish better things. But the religious poetry of the psalms discovered a wonderful agreement with his own lyrical soul; and they remained, during his whole life, his nourishment and support. The prophets, especially Isaiah and the writer who continued his record of the times of the captivity, with their brilliant dreams of the future, their impetuous eloquence, and their invectives mingled with enchanting pictures, were his true masters. He, doubtless, also read many apocryphal works—somewhat modern writings, whose authors, in order to give their productions an authority which would not be granted except to very ancient scriptures, had invested themselves with the names of prophets and patriarchs. One of these books above all others moved him; that was the book of Daniel. This work, composed by an enthusiastic Jew of the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and headed by the name of an ancient sage, was the *résumé* of the spirit of these later days. The author, a true creator of the philosophy of history, was the first who had been bold enough to see in the onward march of the world and the succession of empires only a series of facts subordinated to the destinies of the Jewish people.

Jesus was at an early age penetrated by these



high hopes. Perhaps, moreover, he had read the books of Enoch, then regarded with equal reverence as the holy books, and the other writings of the same class, which kept up so much excitement in the popular imagination. The advent of the Messiah, with its glories and terrors, the nations falling to pieces one after another, the cataclysm of heaven and earth, were the familiar food of his imagination; and as these revolutions were believed to be so close at hand that numbers of people sought to calculate their exact dates, the supernatural state into which men are led by such visions appeared to Jesus from the first quite simple and perfectly natural.

• That he had no acquaintance with the general condition of the world is a fact which is seen in each feature of his best authenticated discourses. The earth to him appeared as still divided into kingdoms making war upon each other; he seemed to ignore the "Roman peace," and the new state of society which its age inaugurated. He had no exact idea of the Roman power; the name of "Cæsar" was all that had reached him. He saw being built, in Galilee or its neighbourhood, Tiberias, Julias, Diocæsarea, Cæsarea—splendid works of the Herods, who sought by these magnificent structures to prove their admiration for Roman civilization, and their devotion to the members of the family of Augustus; and the names of these places, although strangely altered, now serve to designate, as by a caprice of fate, miserable hamlets of Bedouins. Jesus probably also saw Sebaste, a work of Herod the Great, a showy city, whose ruins would make one believe that it had been transported there ready made, like some machine which had only to be set up in its place. This ostentatious piece of architecture was shipped to Judæa in portions; the hundreds of columns, all of the same diameter, the

ornament of some insipid "*Rue de Rivoli*"—these were what he called "the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them." But this luxury of power, this administrative and official art, displeased him. What he really loved was his Galilean villages, a confused mixture of huts, of nests and holes cut in the rocks, of wells, of tombs, of fig-trees and olives. He always clung closely to nature. The courts of kings constantly presented to him the idea of places where men wear fine clothes. The charming impossibilities with which his parables abound, when he brings kings and mighty ones on the stage, prove that he never had any conception of aristocratic society except as a young villager who sees the world through the prism of his own simplicity.

Jesus was still less acquainted with the new idea, created by Grecian science, which is the basis of all philosophy and which modern science has largely confirmed, viz., the exclusion of the supernatural forces to which the simple faith of the ancient times attributed the government of the universe. In this respect he did not differ from his fellow-countrymen. The marvellous was not the exceptional to him; it was his normal state. The idea of the supernatural, with its impossibilities, does not arise except with the birth of the experimental science of nature. The man who is a stranger to all idea of physical law, and who believes that by prayer he can alter the path of the clouds, can arrest disease and even death, finds nothing extraordinary in miracle, inasmuch as the whole course of things is for him the result of the freewill of the Divinity. This intellectual condition was always that of Jesus. But in his great soul such a belief produced effects altogether opposed to those wrought on the vulgar. Among the latter, faith in the special action of God led to a foolish credulity, and deceptions on the part

of charlatans. With him it led to a profound idea of the familiar relations of man with God, and to an exaggerated belief in the power of man—beautiful errors which were the secret of his influence; for, if they became one day the means of putting him in a position of mistake in the eyes of the natural philosopher and the chemist, they gave him, over his own age, a power which no individual has ever possessed before or since.

At an early age his extraordinary character revealed itself. Legend delights to show him even in his infancy in revolt against parental authority, and deviating from the common lines to follow his vocation. It is at least certain that for the relations of kinship he cared little. His family do not seem to have loved him, and more than once he appears to have been severe towards them.

Jesus, like all men exclusively preoccupied by an idea, came to think little of the ties of blood. It is the bond of thought alone which natures like his recognize. "Behold my mother and my brethren," said he, extending his hand towards his disciples; "he that doeth the will of my Father, the same is my brother and sister." The simple people did not understand this view of things, and one day a woman who was passing near him cried out, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that thou hast sucked!" But he replied, "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it!"

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### CHAPTER III.

THE ORDER OF THOUGHT FROM WHOSE CENTRE JESUS  
REVEALED HIMSELF.

As the cooled earth no longer permits us to comprehend the phenomena of primitive creation, because the fire which once penetrated it is extinct;

so merely historical explanations always bear the stamp of insufficiency when the work before us is to apply our timid methods of reasoning to the revolutions of the creative epochs which have decided the fate of humanity. The Jewish people have had the advantage, from the Captivity up to the Middle Ages, of being always in a state of extreme tension. This is why the interpreters of the spirit of the nation, during this long period, seem to have written under the action of a violent fever, which placed them constantly either above or under reason, rarely in its middle pathway. Never did man seize the problem of the future and of his own destiny with a more desperate courage, or more determined to go to extremes.

• Not separating the fate of humanity from that of their little race, the Jewish thinkers were the first who sought to discover a general theory of the progress of our species. Greece, always confined within itself, and only concerned with its petty provincial quarrels, has had admirable historians; but previous to the Roman period it would be a vain attempt to discover in that country a general system of the philosophy of history, embracing all humanity. The Jew, on the contrary, thanks to a sort of prophetic sense, has made history enter into religion. Possibly he owes a little of this spirit to Persia, which, from an ancient date, conceived the history of the world as a series of evolutions, over which a prophet presided. Each prophet had his reign of a thousand years, and out of those successive ages was composed the train of events which prepared the reign of Ormuzd. At the end of the time when the circle of the revolutions shall be completed, the perfect Paradise will appear. Men will then live happily: the earth will be like a great plain; there will be only one language, one law, and one government for all men. But this advent is to be preceded

by terrible calamities. Dahak (the Satan of Persia) will break his chains and fall upon the world. Two prophets will then come to comfort mankind, and to prepare the Great Advent. These ideas ran through the world, and penetrated even to Rome, where they inspired a cycle of prophetic poems, whose fundamental ideas were the division of the history of humanity into periods, the succession of the gods representing these epochs, a complete renewal of the world, and the final coming of a golden age. The book of Daniel, the book of Enoch, and certain parts of the Sibylline books, are the Jewish expression of the same theory. It was certainly not the case that these thoughts were universal. They were, on the contrary, embraced at first only by some people of vivid imagination and readily impressed by strange doctrines. The dry and narrow author of the book of Esther never thought of the rest of the world except to despise it and to wish it evil. The sated and undeceived epicurean who writes Ecclesiastes thinks so little of the future that he considers it even useless to work for his children. In the eyes of this egotistical celibate, the highest advice of wisdom is to find one's chief good in mis-spent money. But great achievements made by any people are generally the work of the minority. In spite of all their defects, hard, egotistical, scoffing, cruel, narrow, subtle, sophistical, the Jews are nevertheless the authors of the finest movement of disinterested enthusiasm of which history speaks. Opposition always makes the glory of a country. In one sense, the greatest men of a nation are those whom it puts to death. Socrates was the glory of the Athenians, who yet would not suffer him to live amongst them. Spinoza was the greatest Jew of modern times, and the synagogue expelled him with ignominy. Jesus was the glory of the people of Israel, and they crucified him.

A gigantic dream for centuries haunted the Jewish people, constantly renewing its youth in its decrepitude. A stranger to profane civilization, Judæa concentrated on her national future all her power of love and longing. She believed herself to possess divine promises of a boundless future; and as the bitter reality which, from the ninth century before our era, gave the domination of the world more and more to physical force, brutally crushed those aspirations, she took refuge in the union of the most impossible ideas, and attempted the strangest gyrations. Before the Captivity, when all the earthly future of the nation disappeared in consequence of the separation of the northern tribes, they had dreamt of the restoration of the house of David, the reconciliation of the two divisions of the people, and the triumph of theocracy and the worship of Jehovah over idolatrous systems. At the time of the Captivity, a poet full of harmony foresaw the splendour of a future Jerusalem, to which the nations and distant isles should be tributaries, under colours so charming, that one would have said that a glance from the eyes of Jesus had reached him from a distance of six centuries.

The victories of Cyrus at one time appeared to realize all that had been hoped for. The grave disciples of the Avesta and the adorers of Jehovah believed themselves brothers. Persia had attained to a kind of monotheism. Israel reposed under the Achemenidæ, and under Xerxes (Ahasuerus) made itself feared by the Iranians themselves. But the triumphant and often cruel entrance of Greek and Roman civilization into Asia, threw it back upon its dreams. More than ever it invoked the Messiah as the judge and avenger of the nations. In fact, there was indeed a complete renovation—a revolution which should take hold of the world by its

roots and shake it from top to bottom—in order to satisfy the fearful longing for vengeance excited in Israel by the consciousness of its superiority and the sight of its humiliation.

Jesus, from the moment he began to think, entered into the burning atmosphere which had been created in Palestine by the ideas we have just referred to. These ideas were taught in no school; but they were “in the air” around him, and his soul was early penetrated by them. Our hesitations and doubts never reached him. On this summit of the hill of Nazareth, where no man of the present day can sit without an uneasy, although frivolous, feeling as to his own destiny, Jesus sat habitually without a doubt. Free from selfishness, the source of our troubles, he thought of nothing but his work, his race, and humanity at large. Those mountains, that sea, that azure sky, those high plains in the horizon, were for him not the melancholy vision of a soul which interrogates nature upon her fate, but the certain symbol, the transparent shadow of an invisible world and a new heaven.

He never attached much importance to the political events of his time, and he was probably badly-informed regarding them. The dynasty of the Herods lived in a world so different from his own, that he doubtless only knew it by name. Herod the Great died about the year in which Jesus was born, leaving imperishable memories—monuments which must compel the most malevolent posterity to associate his name with that of Solomon; his work, nevertheless, was incomplete, and could not be continued. Profanely ambitious, lost, in a maze of religious controversies, this astute Idumean had the advantage which coolness and judgment, stripped of morality, give one in the midst of passionate fanatics. But his conception of a secular kingdom of Israel, even if it had not been an

anachronism in the state of the world in which it was conceived, would have miscarried, like the similar project which Solomon formed, in consequence of the difficulties arising from the peculiar character of the nation. His three sons were nothing but lieutenants of the Romans, analogous to the Rajahs of India under the English Government. Antipater, or Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee and Peræa, whose subject Jesus was all his life, was an idle and empty prince, a favourite and flatterer of Tiberius, and too often misled by the evil influence of his second wife, Herodias. Philip, Tetrarch of Gaulonitis and Batanea, into whose territories Jesus made frequent journeys, was a much better sovereign. As to Archelaus, Ethnarch of Jerusalem, he could not have known him; for he was about ten years of age when this man, weak and characterless, although sometimes violent, was deposed by Augustus. The last trace of self-government was, in this way, lost to Jerusalem. United to Samaria and Idumæa, Judæa formed a kind of dependency of the province of Syria, in which the senator Sulpicius Quirinus, a well-known consular personage, was the imperial legate. A series of Roman procurators, subordinate in affairs of importance to the imperial legate of Syria—Caponius, Marcus Ambivius, Annius Rufus, Valerius Gratus, and lastly (in the 26th year of our era), Pontius Pilate—followed each other, and were incessantly occupied in extinguishing the volcano which was rumbling beneath their feet.

Continual seditions, excited by the zealots of *Mosaicism*, were constantly during this period agitating Jerusalem. The death of the seditious was certain; but death, when the matter concerned the integrity of the Law, was sought for with avidity. To overturn the Roman eagles, to destroy the works of art raised by the Herods, in which the



Mosaic regulations were not always respected, to rebel against the votive escutcheons raised by the procurators, and whose inscriptions seemed to them tainted by idolatry, were perpetual temptations to fanatics who had reached that degree of exaltation which removes all regard for life. Thus it was that Judas, son of Sariphea, Matthias, son of Mar'galoth, two greatly celebrated doctors of the Law, formed against the established order a party of bold aggression, which continued after their execution. The Samaritans were agitated by movements of the same kind. The Law seems never to have counted more impassioned votaries than at this period when there already lived that man who, by the full authority of his genius and of his great soul, was about to abrogate it. The "Zelotes," or "sicarii," pious assassins, who imposed on themselves the task of killing whoever in their estimation broke the Law, began to appear. Representatives of a totally different spirit, the Thaumaturges, considered as in some measure divine, found credence in consequence of the imperious necessity which the age expressed for the supernatural and the divine.

A movement which had much more influence on Jesus was that of Judas, the Gaulonite or Galilean. Of all the constraints to which countries newly conquered by Rome were subjected, the census was the most unpopular. This measure, which always irritates nations little accustomed to the responsibilities of great central administrations, was specially odious to the Jews. Already, under David, we see how a numbering of the people provoked violent recriminations, and the threatenings of the prophets. The census, in fact, was the basis of taxation. Now, taxation, in the estimation of a pure theocracy, was almost an impiety. The money in the public treasury was regarded as stolen. The census ordered by Quirinus (in the sixth year of the Christian era)

powerfully awakened these ideas, and caused a tremendous ferment. A disturbance broke out in the northern provinces. One Judas, of the town of Gamala, on the eastern shore of the Lake of Tiberias, and a Pharisee named Sadoc, by denying the lawfulness of the impost, created a numerous party, which soon broke out into open revolt. The fundamental maxims of this school were that no man ought to be called "master," this title belonging to God alone, and that liberty was better than life. Judas was evidently the chief of a Galilean sect, which was imbued with Messianic ideas, and became a political movement. The procurator, Caponius, crushed the sedition of the Gaulonite; but the party survived and preserved its chiefs. Under the leadership of Menaham, son of its founder, and of one Eleazar, his kinsman, we find it again very active in the last struggles of the Jews with the Romans. Jesus, it may be, saw this Judas, who had conceived a Jewish revolution of a kind so different from his own ideal; at all events he knew the opinions of his school, and it was probably, by a reaction against his mistake, that he pronounced the axiom upon the "penny" of Cæsar. Wisely standing aloof from all sedition, he profited by the fault of his predecessor, and dreamed of another kingdom and of another deliverance.

Galilee was thus a vast furnace, in which the most diverse elements were heaving to a boiling point. An extraordinary contempt for life, or to speak more correctly, a kind of longing for death, was the result of these agitations. Experience counts for nothing in great fanatical movements. Algeria, in the first days of the French occupation, saw arise, each springtime, inspired men who declared that they were invulnerable and were sent by God to expel the infidels; the following year

their death was forgotten, and their successors found an undiminished credence. Very stern on the one hand, the Roman power was not at all meddlesome, and permitted much liberty. These great brute-force despotisms, terrible in repression, were not so suspicious as powers which have some dogma to uphold. They allowed everything to be done up to the point at which they thought they ought to use vigorous measures. In his wandering career, Jesus does not appear to have been once annoyed by the civil authorities. Such a liberty, and above all the happiness which Galilee enjoyed in being much less restrained by the bonds of Pharisaic pedantry, gave to this province a real advantage over Jerusalem. The revolution, or in other words, the Messianic expectations, caused a general mental fermentation here. Men believed that they were on the eve of beholding the great renovation; the Scriptures, tortured into a variety of meanings, became food for the most colossal hopes. In each line of the simple writings of the Old Testament they saw the assurance, and, in a certain sense, the programme of the future reign, which should bring peace to the righteous, and seal for ever the work of God.

From all time this division into two parties, opposed to each other in interest and spirit, had been for the Hebrew people a principle which had been fertile in moral growth. Every nation called to high destinies ought to form a complete little world, including within it the opposite poles. Greece presented, a few leagues apart, Sparta, and Athens, the two antipodes to a superficial observer, but in reality rival sisters, each necessary to the other. It was the same with Judæa. Less brilliant in one sense than the development of Jerusalem, that of the north was on the whole much more fruitful; the noblest works of the Jewish people have

always proceeded thence. A complete absence of the love of nature, almost amounting to something dry, narrow, and even ferocious, has stamped upon all purely Jerusalemite works a character grand, indeed, but sad, arid, and repulsive. With its solemn doctors, its insipid canonists, its hypocritical and atrabilious devotees, Jerusalem had not conquered humanity. The north has given to the world the simple Shunamite, the humble Canaanite, the passionate Magdalene, the good foster-father Joseph, and the Virgin Mary. It is the north alone which has made Christianity; Jerusalem, on the contrary, is the true home of that obstinate Judaism which, founded by the Pharisees and fixed by the Talmud, has traversed the Middle Ages and come down to us.

A beautiful aspect of nature contributed to the formation of this less austere spirit, this less sharply monotheistic spirit, if I may venture to call it, which impressed all the dreams of Galilee with a charming and idyllic character. The region round about Jerusalem is, perhaps, the gloomiest country in the world. Galilee, on the contrary, was exceedingly verdant, shady, smiling, the true home of the Song of Songs, and the Canticles of the well-beloved. During the two months of March and April the country is a carpet of flowers, with an incomparable freedom of colouring. The animals are small and extremely gentle;—delicate and lively turtle-doves, blue-birds so light that they rest on a blade of grass without bending it; crested larks which advance nearly under the very feet of the traveller; little river-tortoises with sweet and lively eyes, and also storks with grave and modest mien, which, dismissing all timidity, allow themselves to be approached quite closely, and seem almost to invite the companionship of men. In no country in the world do the mountains spread themselves out

with more harmony, or inspire loftier thought. Jesus seems to have specially loved them. The most important acts of his career took place on mountains. It was there he was the most inspired; it was there he held secret communings with the ancient prophets; it was there he shewed himself transfigured before the eyes of his disciples.

This lovely country, which at the present day has become (through the woeful impoverishing influence which Islamism has wrought on human life), so sad and wretched, but where everything that man cannot destroy breathes still an air of freedom, sweetness, and tenderness, overflowed with happiness and joy at the time of Jesus. The Galileans were reckoned brave, energetic, and laborious. If we except Tiberias, built by Antipas in the Roman style, in honour of Tiberius (about the year 15), Galilee had no large towns. The country was nevertheless covered with small towns and large villages well peopled, and cultivated with skill in every direction. From the ruins of its ancient splendour which survive, we can trace an agricultural people, in no way gifted in art, caring little for luxury, indifferent to the beauties of form, and exclusively idealistic. The country abounded in fresh streams and fruits; the large farms were shaded with vines and fig-trees; the gardens were a mass of apple and walnut trees, and pomegranates. The wine was excellent, if it may be judged from what the Jews still obtain at Safed, and they drank freely of it. This contented and easily-satisfied life did not at all resemble the gross materialism of our peasantry, or the coarse happiness of agricultural Normandy, or the heavy mirth of the Flemings. It spiritualized itself in mysterious dreams—in a kind of poetical mysticism, blending heaven and earth. Leave the austere John Baptist in his desert of Judæa, to preach penitence, to inveigh unceasingly,

and to live on locusts in the company of jackals! Why should the companions of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? Joy will be a part of the kingdom of God. Is she not the daughter of the humble in heart, of the men of goodwill?

The entire history of infant Christianity is in this sense a delightful pastoral. A Messiah at the marriage supper, the courtesan and the good Zaccheus called to his feasts, the founders of the kingdom of heaven like a bridal procession;—this is what Galilee has dared to offer, and what the world has really accepted.

Greece has drawn admirable pictures of human life in sculpture and poetry, but always without backgrounds or receding perspectives. Here were wanting the marble, the practised workmen, the exquisite and refined language. But Galilee has created for the popular imagination the most sublime ideal; for behind its idyll the fate of humanity moves, and the light which illumines its picture is the sun of the kingdom of God.

Jesus lived and grew up amidst those elevating surroundings. From his infancy, he went almost every year to the feast at Jerusalem. The pilgrimage was for the provincial Jews a solemnity of sweet associations. Several entire series of psalms were consecrated to celebrate the happiness of thus journeying in family society during several days across the hills and valleys, all having in prospect the splendours of Jerusalem, the solemnities of the sacred courts, and the joy of brethren dwelling together. The route which Jesus usually followed in these journeys was that which is taken in the present day, through Ginæa and Shechem. From Shechem to Jerusalem travelling is very toilsome. But the neighbourhood of the old sanctuaries of Shiloh and Bethel, near which the pilgrim passes, keeps the mind awake with interest. *Ain-el-Haramië*,

the last halting-place, is a melancholy and yet charming spot; and few impressions equal that which one feels when encamping there for the night. The valley is narrow and sombre, while a dark stream issues from the rocks full of tombs, which form its banks. It is, I believe, "the valley of tears," or of dropping waters; which is sung as one of the stations on the way in the delightful eighty-fourth Psalm; and it became, to the sweet and sad mysticism of the Middle Ages, the emblem of life. The next day, at an early age, the travellers would be at Jerusalem; this expectation, even at the present day, sustains the caravan, rendering the night short and slumber light.

These journeys, during which the assembled nation exchanged its ideas, and which were almost always centres of great excitement, placed Jesus in contact with the mind of his countrymen, and doubtless inspired him from his youth with a lively antipathy to the defects of the official representatives of Judaism. It is observable that very early the desert had been for him like a school, and to this he had made prolonged visits. But the God he found there was not his God. It was emphatically rather the God of Job, severe and terrible, and who is accountable to none. Sometimes Satan came to tempt him. He then returned from these sojourns into his beloved Galilee, and found again his heavenly Father, in the midst of the green hills and the clear fountains—among the crowds of women and children who, with joyous soul and the song of the angels in their hearts, waited for the salvation of Israel.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST SAYINGS OF JESUS—HIS IDEAS OF A "FATHER-GOD" AND OF A PURE RELIGION—FIRST DISCIPLES.

JOSEPH died before his son had assumed any public

position. Mary remained, in a manner, the head of the family; and this explains why her son, when it was desired to distinguish him from others of the same name, was most frequently called "the son of Mary." It would seem that having, through her husband's death, become friendless in Nazareth, she retired to Cana, which was probably her native place. Cana was a little town about two or two and a half hours' journey from Nazareth, at the base of the hills which bound the plain of Asochis on the north. The prospect, less grand than that at Nazareth, extends over the whole plain, and is bounded in the most picturesque manner by the mountains of Nazareth and the hills of Sephoris. Jesus appears to have resided in this place for some time. There he probably passed a part of his youth, and his first manifestations were made at Cana. He wrought at the same occupation as his father—that of a carpenter. This was no humiliating or vexatious circumstance. The Jewish custom demanded that a man devoted to intellectual work should assume a handicraft. The most celebrated doctors had their trades; it was thus that St. Paul, whose education was so elaborate, was a tent-maker.

Jesus never married. All his power of loving expended itself on what he considered his heavenly vocation. The extremely delicate sentiment which one observes in his manner towards women did not interfere with the exclusive devotion he cherished for his idea. Like Francis d'Assisi and Francis de Sales, he treated as sisters the women who threw themselves into the same work as he did; he had his Saint Claires, and his Françoise de Chantals. However, it is probable that they loved himself better than his work; he was certainly more beloved than loving. As happens frequently in the case of very lofty natures, his tenderness of heart trans-



formed itself into an infinite sweetness, a vague poetry, a universal charm.

What was the progress of thought in Jesus during this obscure period of his life? Through what meditations did he enter upon his prophetic career? We cannot tell, his history having come to us in the shape of scattered narratives and without exact chronology. But the development of living character is everywhere the same, and it cannot be doubted that the growth of a personality so powerful as that of Jesus obeyed very rigorous laws. An exalted conception of the Divinity—which he did not owe to Judaism, and which appears to have been in all its parts the creation of his great intellect—was in a manner the source of all his power. It is the idea of a Father-God, whose voice is heard in the calm of the conscience and in the silence of the heart. Jesus had no visions; God did not speak to him as to one outside of himself; God was in him; he felt himself with God, and he drew from his own heart all he said of his Father. He lived in the bosom of God by an unceasing communication; he did not see Him, but he understood Him, without need of the thunder or the burning bush of Moses, of the revealing tempest of Job, of the oracle of the old Greek sages, of the familiar genius of Socrates, or of the angel Gabriel of Mahomet. The imagination and the hallucination of a Saint Theresa, for example, are valueless here. The intoxication of the Soufi proclaiming himself identical with God is also a totally different thing. Jesus never once announced the sacrilegious theory, that he was God. He believed himself to be in direct communication with God—he believed himself to be the Son of God. The highest consciousness of God which has existed in the bosom of humanity is that of Jesus.

We understand, on the other hand, that Jesus,

commencing his work with such a disposition of mind, could never be a speculative philosopher. He did not argue with his disciples; he demanded from them no effort of attention. Nothing is farther apart from scholastic theology than the Gospel. The speculations of the Greek Fathers on the Divine essence proceed from a totally different spirit. God conceived directly as Father, was all the theology of Jesus.

He, no doubt, did not reach at one step this high assertion of himself. But it is probable that, from the first, he looked on himself as standing with God in the relation of a son to his father. This was his grand act of originality; there was nothing here in common with his race. Neither the Jew nor the Mussulman has understood this delightful theology of love. The God of Jesus is not the tyrannical master who kills, damns, or saves us, just as it pleases Him. The God of Jesus is *our* Father. We hear Him while listening to the gentle inspiration which cries within us—"Father." The God of Jesus is not the partial despot who has chosen Israel for His people, and protects them against all the world. He is the God of humanity. Jesus would not be a patriot like the Maccabees, or a theocrat like Judas the Gaulonite. Boldly elevating himself above the prejudices of his nation, he would establish the universal Fatherhood of God. The Gaulonite maintained that it was better for one to die than to give the title of "Master" to any other than God; Jesus would allow any man to take this name, but reserves for God a title dearer still. Yielding to the powerful of the earth, who were to him the representatives of force, a respect full of irony, he establishes the supreme consolation—the recourse to the Father whom each one has in heaven, and the true kingdom of God which every man carries in his heart.

This expression—"the kingdom of God" or "the kingdom of heaven"—was the favourite term of Jesus to describe the revolution he was bringing into the world. Like nearly all the terms relating to the Messiah, it came from the book of Daniel. According to the author of that extraordinary book, the four profane empires destined to extinction, would be succeeded by a fifth empire—that of the saints which should endure for ever. This reign of God upon earth naturally led to the most divers interpretations. In the later days of his life Jesus believed that this reign would be realized in a material form by a sudden renovation of the world. But this was, doubtless, not his first idea. The admirable moral which he drew from the notion of the Father-God is not that of enthusiasts who believe the world to be nearly at an end, and who prepare themselves by asceticism for a chimerical catastrophe; it is that of a world which has lived and would live still. "The kingdom of God is within you," he said to those who sought with subtilty for external signs. The realistic conception of the Divine Advent was only a cloud, a transient error, which his death has made us forget. The Jesus who founded the true kingdom of God, the kingdom of the meek and the humble, was the Jesus of early life, of those pure and cloudless days when the voice of his Father re-echoed within his bosom in clearer tones. It was then for some months—a year perhaps—that God truly dwelt on earth. The voice of the young carpenter acquired all at once an extraordinary sweetness. An infinite charm was exhaled from his person, and those who had hitherto seen him recognized him as the same no longer. He had not as yet any disciples, and the group of people which gathered round him was neither a sect nor a school; but there was already felt among them a common spirit, and an influence both sweet

and penetrating. His amiable character, and doubtless one of these exquisite faces which sometimes appear in the Jewish race, threw around him a fascination from which no one, in the midst of these kindly and fresh-minded peoples, could escape.

Paradise would, in fact, have been brought to earth if the ideas of the young Master had not far transcended that level of ordinary goodness which the human race has found it hitherto impossible to pass. The brotherhood of men, as sons of God, and the moral consequences which have resulted from it, were deduced with exquisite feeling. Like all the rabbis of the period, Jesus little affected consecutive reasonings, but clothed his teaching in concise aphorisms, and in an expressive form, sometimes enigmatical and singular. Some of these maxims came from the books of the Old Testament. Others were the thoughts of more modern sages, especially of Antigonus of Soco, Jesus, son of Sirach, and Hillel, which had reached him, not through a course of learned study, but as oft-repeated proverbs. The synagogue was rich in very happily-expressed maxims, which formed a sort of current proverbial literature. Jesus adopted almost all this oral teaching, but imbued it with a superior spirit. Generally exceeding the duties laid down by the Law and the elders, he demanded perfection. All the virtues of humility, pardon, charity, abnegation, and self-denial—virtues which have been called with good reason Christian—if it is meant by this that they have been truly preached by Christ—were found in germ in this first declaration. As to justice, he contented himself with repeating the well-known axiom—"Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them." But this old wisdom, selfish enough as it was, did not satisfy him. He went to excess, declaring—

“Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law. and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak-also.” “If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee.” “Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you; pray for them that persecute you.” “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” “Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.” “Be therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.” “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” “Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.”

In regard to alms, pity, good-works, kindness, the desire for peace, and complete disinterestedness of heart, he had little to add to the teaching of the synagogue. But he stamped them with an emphasis full of unction, and thus made new those aphorisms which had long been current. Morality is not composed of more or less well-expressed principles. The poetry of the precept, which makes one love it, is more than the precept itself, viewed as an abstract truth. Little original in itself—if it is meant by that that one might re-compose it almost entirely by means of more ancient maxims—the morality of the Gospel remains no less the loftiest creation of the human conscience, the most beautiful code of perfect life which any moralist has traced.

Jesus did not speak against the Mosaic law; but it is clear that he saw its insufficiency, and he let this be distinctly understood. He repeated constantly that more must be done than the ancient sages commanded. He forbade the least harsh word; he prohibited divorce, and all swearing; he censured revenge; he condemned usury; he held voluptuous desire to be as criminal as adultery. He demanded a universal forgiveness of injuries. The motive on which he grounded these maxims of

exalted charity was always the same. . . .  
“That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good.” “For if,” he added, “ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

A pure worship, a religion without priests or external observances, resting entirely on the feelings of the heart, on the imitation of God, on the direct communication between the conscience and the heavenly Father, was the result of these principles. Jesus never shrank from this daring consequence, which made him, in the very centre of Judaism, a revolutionist of the first rank. Why should there be any intermediaries between man and his Father? As God only looks on the heart, of what use are these purifications—these observances which only relate to the body? Even tradition, a thing so sacred to the Jew, is nothing compared to a pure feeling. The hypocrisy of the Pharisees who, in praying, turned their heads to see if they were observed, who gave alms with ostentation, and put on their garments marks by which they might be recognized as pious persons—all these grimaces of false devotion disgusted him. “They have their reward,” said he; “but thou, when thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, that thy alms may be in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.” “And thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain

repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him."

He did not affect any outward sign of asceticism, contenting himself with praying, or rather meditating, upon the mountains and in those solitary places where man has always sought God. This lofty idea of the relations of man with God, of which so few minds, even after him, have been capable, is summed up in a prayer which he at that time taught his disciples:—

"Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation; deliver us from the evil one."

Jesus insisted particularly upon the idea that the heavenly Father knows better than we do what we need, and that we almost sin against Him in asking Him for this or that particular thing.

Jesus did nothing more in this matter than to carry out the consequences of the great principles which Judaism had established, but which the official classes of the nation inclined more and more to despise. Never had Pagan priest said to the faithful, "If thou bring thy offering to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way; first be reconciled with thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Alone in antiquity, the Jewish prophets, especially Isaiah, in their antipathy to the priesthood, had discovered a little of the true nature of the worship which man owes to God. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I

delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats."

In later times such doctors as Simeon the Just, Jesus son of Sirach, and Hillel, almost reached this point, and declared that the sum of the Law was righteousness. Philo, in the Judæo-Egyptian world, attained at the same time as Jesus ideas of a high moral sanctity; and the consequence of this was a decreasing regard for the customs of the Law. Shemaïa and Abtalion also more than once shewed themselves very liberal casuists. Rabbi Johanan ere long went so far as to place works of mercy above even the study of the Law! Jesus alone, however, proclaimed this principle in an effective manner. Never has any man been less a priest than Jesus, and never has there been a greater enemy of forms which stifle religion under the pretext of protecting it. In this way we are all his disciples and his successors; in this way he has laid the eternal foundation-stone of true religion; and if religion is the essential thing for humanity, by this he has merited the divine rank which men have awarded him. An absolutely new idea—the idea of a worship founded upon purity of heart and on human brotherhood, made, through him, its entrance into the world—an idea so elevated that the Christian Church ought by this feature to disclose exhaustively its design, but an idea which, in our days, only some minds are able to grasp.

An exquisite sympathy with nature furnished Jesus with expressive images at every turn. Sometimes a wonderful ingenuity, which we call wit, adorned his aphorisms; at other times their vivacity consisted in the happy use of popular proverbs. "How wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull the mote out of thine eye; and behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite; first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then thou shalt see



clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye."

These lessons, long concealed in the heart of the young Master, soon gathered round him a few learners. The spirit of the age was in favour of small churches; it was the time of the Essenes or Therapeutæ. Certain Rabbis, each having his own distinctive teaching, Shamaïa, Abtalion, Hillel, Shammaï, Judas the Gaulonite, Gamaliel, and many others whose maxims form the Talmud. appeared on all sides. They wrote very little; the Jewish doctors of that age did not make books; everything was done by conversation and public lessons, to which it was sought to give a form easily remembered. The day when the youthful carpenter began openly to proclaim those maxims, for the most part already propagated, but which, thanks to him, have been able to regenerate the world, marked therefore no very startling event. It was only one Rabbi more (true, the most fascinating of them all), and around him a few young people, greedy to hear him and to search for the unknown. It requires time to awake men from inattention. There was not as yet any Christian, though true Christianity was founded already, and doubtless it has never been more perfect than at this first period. Jesus added nothing more enduring to it afterwards. What do I say? In one sense he compromised it; for every idea, in order to prevail, must make sacrifices; we never come out of the battle of life unscathed.

To conceive the good, in fact, is not enough; it is necessary to make it succeed amongst men. To this end, less pure paths must be followed. No doubt, if the Gospel were confined to some chapters of Matthew and Luke, it would be more perfect, and would certainly not be open now to so many objections; but without miracles would it have

conquered the world? If Jesus had died at the period of his career which we have now reached, there would not have been in his life a single page that could wound us; but, although greater thus in the eyes of God, he would have remained unknown to men; he would have been lost in the crowd of great unknown spirits—himself the noblest of them all; the truth would not have been promulgated, and the world would not have profited by the immense moral superiority with which the Father had endowed him. Jesus, the son of Sirach, and Hillel, had uttered aphorisms nearly as elevated as his own. Hillel, however, will never be reckoned the true founder of Christianity. In morals, as in art, precept is nothing; practice is everything. The idea which lies hidden in a picture of Raphael is of small moment; it is the picture itself which is prized. In the same manner, in morals, truth is very little thought of when it only reaches the condition of being a mere feeling; it only attains its full value when it is realized in the world as a certain fact. Some men of mediocre morality have written a number of good maxims. Some very virtuous men, on the other hand, have done nothing to continue in the world the tradition of virtue. The palm is his who has been powerful both in words and deeds, who has discerned the good, and at the price of his blood, has made it triumph. Jesus, from this double point of view, is without equal; his glory remains entire, and will ever be renewed.

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## CHAPTER V.

JOHN THE BAPTIST—VISIT OF JESUS TO JOHN, AND HIS ABODE IN THE DESERT OF JUDEA—HE ADOPTS THE BAPTISM OF JOHN.

AN extraordinary man, whose position in the

absence of documents to describe it, remains to us in some measure enigmatical, appeared about this time, and was unquestionably connected to some extent with Jesus. This connection rather tended to make the young prophet of Nazareth deviate from his path; but it also suggested many important accessories to his religious institution, and at all events, it furnished his disciples with a very strong authority to recommend their master in the eyes of a certain class of Jews.

About the year 28 of our era (the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius), there spread through all Palestine the fame of a certain Johanan or John, a young ascetic full of zeal and enthusiasm. John was of the priestly race, and was born, it would seem, at Juttah, near Hebron, or at Hebron itself. This city, which may be called patriarchal beyond all others, situated a short distance from the desert of Judaea, and within a few hours' journey of the great desert of Arabia, was at that time what it is still to-day, one of the bulwarks of monotheism in its most austere form.

From his infancy John was a Nazarite—that is to say, subjected by vow to certain abstinences. The desert by which he was, so to speak, surrounded, attracted him from early life. He led there a life like that of a Yogi of India, clothed with skins or cloth of camel's hair, having for food only locusts and wild honey. A certain number of disciples were grouped around him, sharing his life or studying his severe doctrine. We might imagine ourselves transported to the banks of the Ganges, if special features had not revealed in this recluse the last descendant of the grand prophets of Israel.

Since the Jewish nation had begun to reflect upon its destiny with a kind of despair, the imagination of the people had reverted with much complacency to the ancient prophets. Now, of all

the personages of the past, the remembrance of whom came like the dreams of a troubled night to awaken and agitate the people, the greatest was Elias. This giant of the prophets and his rough solitude of Carmel, where he shared the life of wild beasts, dwelling in the hollows of the rocks, whence he came like a thunderbolt to make and unmake kings, had become, by successive transformations, a sort of superhuman being, sometimes visible, sometimes invisible, and one who had not tasted of death. It was generally believed that Elias would return and restore Israel. The austere life which he had led, the terrible remembrances he had left behind him—the impression of which is still vivid in the East—that sombre portraiture which, even in our own days, causes trembling and death; all this mythology, full of vengeance and terrors, powerfully struck the public feeling and stamped, as with a birth-mark, all the creations of the popular mind. Whoever aspired to any great influence over the people must imitate Elias; and as a solitary life had been the essential characteristic of that prophet, they were accustomed to conceive of “the man of God” as a hermit. They imagined that all holy personages would have their days of penitence, of solitary life, and of austerity. The retreat to the desert thus became the condition and the prelude of high destinies.

There can be no doubt that this idea of imitation had occupied John's mind to a considerable degree. The anchorite life, so opposed to the spirit of the ancient Jewish people, pervaded all parts of Judæa. The Essenes or Therapeutæ were grouped near the birthplace of John, on the eastern shores of the Dead Sea. People imagined that the chiefs of any sect should be recluses, having their own rules and institutions, like the founders of religious orders. The teachers of the young were also at times a

species of anchorites, resembling to some extent the *gourous* of Brahminism.

The fundamental practice which gave to the sect of John its character, and which has given him his name, was baptism, or total immersion. Ablutions were already familiar to the Jews, as they were to all the religions of the East. The Essenes had given them a peculiar extension. Baptism had become an ordinary ceremony at the introduction of proselytes into the bosom of the Jewish religion—a sort of initiatory rite. But never before the Baptist's time had there been given to baptism either this form or importance. John had fixed the scene of his labours in that part of the desert of Judæa which borders on the Dead Sea. At the periods when he administered baptism, he betook himself to the banks of the Jordan, either to Bethany or to Bethabara, on the eastern shore, probably opposite Jericho, or to a place called Ænon, or the Fountains, near Salim, where there was much water. There considerable crowds, mainly of the tribe of Judah, hastened to him to be baptized. In a few months he thus became one of the most influential men in Judæa, and all the multitude held him in high estimation.

The people considered him a prophet, and many imagined that he was Elias who had risen from the dead. The belief in such resurrections was widely spread; it was thought that God would raise from their graves certain of the ancient prophets to serve as the leaders of Israel to its final destiny. Others took John for the Messiah himself, although he certainly made no such pretension. The priests and scribes, opposed to this revival of prophetism, and always antagonistic to enthusiasts, despised him. But the popularity of the Baptist awed them, and they dared not speak against him. It was a victory which the feeling of the vulgar gained over

the priestly aristocracy. When the chief priests were obliged to explain their exact position on this point they were much embarrassed.

Baptism, however, was to John nothing more than a sign, destined to make an impression and to prepare men's minds for some great movement. There is no doubt that he was imbued in the highest degree with the Messianic expectations, and that his principal action was in that direction. "Repent," said he, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He announced a "great wrath," that is to say, terrible calamities which were to come, and declared that the axe was already at the root of the tree, and that the tree would soon be cast into the fire. The Messiah he described had a fan in his hand, gathering in the wheat and burning the chaff. Repentance, of which baptism was the type, the giving of alms, and the reformation of manners, were to John's mind the great means of preparation for the coming events. We cannot discover in what light exactly he looked at these events. What we are sure of is that he preached with much power against the same adversaries as Jesus, against the rich priests, the Pharisees, the doctors—in one word, against official Judaism; and that, like Jesus, he was specially welcomed by the despised classes. He reduced to a small value the title "son of Abraham," and declared that God could raise up children to Abraham from the stones on the ground. It does not seem that he possessed, even in germ, the great idea which led to the triumph of Jesus—the conception of a pure religion; but he powerfully served this idea by substituting a private rite for these legal ceremonies for which priests were required, just as the Flagellants of the Middle Ages were the precursors of the Reformation, by denying to the official clergy the monopoly of the sacraments and of absolution. The general tone of his sermons

was severe and stern. The expressions he used against his adversaries appear to have been very violent. It was a harsh and continuous invective. It is probable that he did not remain a complete stranger to politics. Josephus, who was almost directly brought into connection with John, through his teacher Banou, lets us understand this by his ambiguous words, and the catastrophe which put an end to the Baptist's life seems to imply that it was so. His disciples led a very austere life, fasted frequently, and affected a sad and anxious demeanour. We appear sometimes to discover the dawn of the theory of communism in goods—the tenet that the rich man is obliged to share what he possesses with the poor. The poor already appeared as the class who would benefit in the first degree by the kingdom of God.

Although the centre of John's action was Judæa, his fame penetrated quickly to Galilee and reached Jesus, who, by his first discourses, had already gathered round him a little circle of hearers. Enjoying up to this point little authority, and doubtless impelled by the desire to see a teacher whose instructions had so much in them that was in sympathy with his own ideas, Jesus left Galilee and went with his small band of pupils to visit John. The new comers were baptized like every one else. John very warmly welcomed this group of Galilean disciples, and found nothing objectionable in their remaining distinct from his own followers. The two teachers had many ideas in common; they loved one another and vied with each other before the public in reciprocal kindness of expression. Youth is capable of all abnegations, and it may be readily admitted that these two young enthusiasts, full of the same hopes and the same hatreds, made common cause and mutually helped each other.

These good relations became afterwards the

starting-point of a whole system developed by the evangelists, which consisted in giving John's attestation as the primary basis of the mission of Jesus. Such was the degree of authority attained by the Baptist, that men thought it would be impossible to find in the world a better guarantee. But far from the Baptist having abdicated before Jesus, Jesus, during all the time he passed with him, recognized him as his superior, and only developed his own genius with timidity.

It seems, indeed, that, notwithstanding his profound originality, Jesus, during some weeks or months, was the imitator of John. The way before him was yet obscure. Baptism had been brought into great favour by John; Jesus thought himself obliged to follow his example; therefore he baptized, and his disciples also. No doubt they accompanied this ceremony with preaching similar to that of John. The river Jordan was thus covered on all sides by Baptists, whose discourses were more or less successful. The disciple soon equalled the master, and his baptism was much prized. There was on this subject some jealousy among the disciples; the pupils of John came to him to complain of the increasing success of the young Galilean, whose baptism would soon, they feared, supplant their own. But the two masters remained superior to this meanness. The superiority of John was, besides, too indisputable for Jesus, (still little known) to think of contesting it. He desired only to increase under John's shadow, and considered himself obliged, in order to gain the multitude, to employ the external means which in the case of John had produced such astonishing success. When he began to preach again after John's arrest, the first words which are said to have been used by him are nothing but the repetition of one of the familiar phrases of the Baptist. Many other ex-



pressions of John are to be found verbally in his discourses. The two schools appear to have lived for a long time with a good mutual understanding, and, after John's death, Jesus, as his trusty friend, was one of the first to be informed of the event.

John, in fact, was soon cut short in his prophetic career. Like the old Jewish prophets, he was, in the highest degree, a censurer of the established authorities. The extreme vivacity with which he expressed himself regarding them could not fail to draw him into an embarrassing position. In Judæa, John does not appear to have been disturbed by Pilate; but, in Perea, beyond the Jordan, he came into the territories of Antipas. This tyrant was uneasy at the political leaven which was thinly veiled by John in his preaching. The great assemblages of men, formed by religious and patriotic enthusiasm which had gathered round the Baptist, had a suspicious aspect. An entirely personal grievance, besides, was added to these motives of state, and rendered the death of the austere censurer inevitable.

One of the most strongly-marked characters in this tragical family of the Herods was Herodias, grand-daughter of Herod the Great. Violent, ambitious, and passionate, she detested Judaism, and despised its laws. She had been married, probably against her will, to her uncle, Herod, son of Mariamne, whom Herod the Great had disinherited, and who never had assumed any public part. The inferior position of her husband, in comparison with the other members of the family, allowed her no peace of mind; she resolved to be sovereign at any cost. Antipas was the instrument by which she acted. This weak man, having become desperately enamoured of her, promised to marry her and to repudiate his first wife, the daughter of Haretto, king of Petra, and emir of

the neighbouring tribes of Perea. The Arabian princess, having obtained a hint of this purpose, resolved to fly. Concealing her design, she pretended that she wished to make a journey to Machero, in her father's territory, and caused herself to be conducted by the officers of Antipas.

Makaur, or Machero, was a colossal fortress built by Alexander Janneus, and rebuilt by Herod, in one of the most rugged wadys to the east of the Dead Sea. This was a wild and savage country, full of extraordinary legends, and was believed to be haunted by demons. The fortress was just on the boundary of the lands of Hareth and Antipas. At this period it was in the possession of Hareth. Having been forewarned, the latter had prepared everything for the flight of his daughter, who was re-conducted, from tribe to tribe, to Petra.

The almost incestuous union of Antipas and Herodias then took place. The Jewish laws as to marriage were a constant rock of offence between the irreligious family of the Herods and the strict Jews. The members of this numerous and somewhat isolated dynasty being obliged to intermarry to a large extent, there frequently resulted violations of the limits prescribed by the Law. John was thus the echo of the general feeling when he rebuked Antipas. This was more than sufficient to decide the latter to follow up his suspicions. He caused the Baptist to be arrested and confined in the fortress of Machero, of which he had probably taken possession after the departure of the daughter of Hareth.

More timid than cruel, Antipas did not wish to put John to death. According to certain reports, he feared popular sedition. According to another version, he had taken pleasure in listening to his prisoner, and these interviews had thrown him into great perplexities. What is certain is, that the

detention was prolonged, and that John preserved, even in prison, an extensive influence. He corresponded with his disciples, and we find him still in connection with Jesus. His faith in the near approach of the Messiah only became firmer; he attentively followed the movements outside, and sought to discover the signs that were favourable to the accomplishment of the hopes by which he was sustained.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE IDEAS OF JESUS RELATIVE TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

UP to the arrest of John, which may be dated approximately in the summer of the year 29, Jesus did not quit the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea and of the Jordan. A sojourn in the desert of Judæa was generally considered as the preparation for great things, as a sort of retreat before public acts. Jesus in this respect followed the example of others, and passed forty days in no other society than that of the wild beasts, maintaining a rigorous fast. The desert was, according to popular belief, the abode of demons. There are to be found in the world few regions more desolate, more God-forsaken, more shut off from all outward life, than the rocky declivity which forms the western border of the Dead Sea. It was believed that during the time Jesus passed in this frightful country, he had gone through terrible trials; that Satan had assailed him with his illusions or tempted him by seductive promises, and that finally, to reward him for his victory, angels had come and ministered to him.

It was probably in returning from the desert that Jesus was informed of the arrest of John the Baptist. He had no further reason now to prolong his stay in a country which was comparatively strange to him. He accordingly went back to Galilee, his true fatherland, ripened by an important experience, and having acquired, through contact with a great man very different from himself, a consciousness of his own originality.

On the whole, the influence of John had been more harmful than useful to Jesus. It checked his development; for everything leads us to believe that when he went towards the Jordan, he had ideas superior to those of John, and it was out of a kind of concession that he inclined for a moment towards baptism. Probably if the Baptist, to whose authority it would have been difficult to submit himself, had remained at liberty, he would not have thought of casting off the yoke of rites and of materialistic practices, and henceforth might have remained an unknown Jewish sectary; for the world had not yet abandoned these practices for others. It is the charm of a religion stripped of all exterior forms that has attracted the most elevated minds to Christianity. The Baptist, once imprisoned, his followers became rapidly fewer, and Jesus found himself at liberty to follow his own bent. The only things he was indebted in a sort of way to John for, were instructions in the art of preaching and in attracting popularity. From that moment, in fact, he preached with much more force, and awed the multitude with his authority.

It appears also that his close intercourse with John, not so much by the influence of the Baptist as by the natural development of his own mind, matured many of his ideas about the "kingdom of heaven." His watchword henceforth is glad tidings; and the announcement that the kingdom of heaven

*is at hand. Jesus is no longer a delightful moralist merely, aspiring to embody in a few vivid and concise aphorisms sublime lessons; he is a transcendental revolutionary who attempts to renovate the world from its very basis, and to found on earth the ideal which he has conceived. "The kingdom of God" is at hand, is to be synonymous with being a disciple of Jesus. The phrase "kingdom of God," or kingdom of Heaven," as we have already said, had been long familiar to the Jews. Jesus, however, gave to it a moral sense—a social application, that the author of the book of Daniel himself, in his enthusiastic apocalypse, dared hardly venture upon.*

In the world, as it is constituted, it is the evil that prevails. Satan is the "king of this world," and everything obeys him. The priests and the doctors do not the things which they order others to do. The just are persecuted, and the sole portion of the good is to weep. The "world" is a species of enemies of God and His saints; but God will reveal Himself and avenge His saints. The day is at hand; for abomination is rampant. The reign of justice is to have its turn.

The advent of the reign of justice is to be a great and unexpected revolution. The world is to be turned upside down; the present state being bad, to represent the future, it is sufficient to conceive as near as may be the contrary of that which exists. The first shall be last. A new order will rule humanity. At present the good and the bad are mixed like wheat and tares in a field. The Master allows them to grow together; but the hour of abrupt separation is to come. The kingdom of God is to be like a great net, which gathers both good and bad fish; we put the good into vessels, and cast the bad away. The beginning of that great revolution will be hardly recognizable. It will be

like the grain of mustard seed, which, though the least of all seeds, being cast into the earth, becomes a tree under the leaves of whose branches the birds come and repose; or again, it will be like the leaven, which, put into bread, leavens the whole lump. A series of often obscure parables was designed to express the surprises of that unexpected advent, its apparent injustices, its inevitable and definite character.

Who is to establish this kingdom of God? Let us recall that the first thought of Jesus—a thought so deeply rooted in him, that it was probably intuitive, forming part of his very being, was that he was the son of God, the bosom friend of his father, the executor of his decrees. The response of Jesus to such a question could not then be doubtful. The persuasion that he should found the kingdom of God took, in the most absolute manner, possession of his mind. He looked upon himself as the universal reformer. Heaven, earth, all nature, depravity, disease, and death are only his instruments. In the glow of his heroic will, he believes himself to be all powerful. If the earth does not lend itself to this complete transformation, it will be broken up, purified by fire and by the breath of God. A new heaven will be created, and the whole earth peopled with the angels of God.

A complete revolution, extending to nature itself—such was the fundamental idea of Jesus. Henceforth, it is certain, he renounced politics; the example of Judas the Gaulonite showed him the uselessness of popular seditions. He never dreamt of revolting against the Romans and the tetrarchs. The wild and anarchical principles of the Gaulonite found no favour with him. His submission to the powers that be, derisive at bottom no doubt, was outwardly complete. He paid tribute

to Cæsar, to avoid trouble. Liberty and right do not belong to this world; why then trouble himself with vain susceptibilities? Despising the earth, convinced that the world did not merit solicitude, he sought refuge in his ideal kingdom; he established that great doctrine of transcendent contempt, which is the true doctrine of freedom of thought and mind alone, brings peace. But so far he had not said:—"My kingdom is not of this world." Much obscurity was mixed up with his most perfect views. Sometimes singular temptations crossed his mind. In the desert of Judæa, Satan proposed to give him the kingdoms of this world. Not knowing the power of the Roman Empire, he could, with the amount of enthusiasm there was in Judæa, resulting soon after in so terrible a military resistance, he could, I say, considering the daring and the numbers of his partisans, hope to establish a kingdom. Many times, no doubt, this was the supreme thought with him: The kingdom of God, is it to be realized by force, or by gentleness, by revolt or by patience? One day, we are told that the common people of Galilee sought to carry him away and make him king; but Jesus fled into the mountains, and remained there for a time alone. His lofty nature shielded him from the error which would make him an agitator, or a chief of rebels, a Theodas or a Barkokela.

The revolution that he sought to bring about was a moral revolution; but he had not yet reached the point of trusting to the angels and the last trumpet for its execution. It was only upon men and through men that he wished to act. A visionary who had no other idea than the proximity of the last judgment, would not have had this care for the amelioration of man, and would not have laid down the finest moral precepts humanity has ever received. There was no doubt still much vagueness in his

ideas; and it was exalted sentiment rather than fixed design, which urged him on to the sublime work he had conceived, though in a manner quite different from what he imagined.

It is in fact the kingdom of God, I mean, the kingdom of mind, that he founded, and, if Jesus from the bosom of his father sees his work bearing fruit through the ages he may indeed truly say: "This is what I wished." That which Jesus founded, and which will remain his to all eternity—deductions being made for the imperfections which enter into everything accomplished by mankind—is the doctrine of freedom of mind. Greece had already exalted ideas on the subject. Several stoics had discovered the means of being free under a tyrant. But, in general, the ancient world only understood liberty as attached to certain political forms; Harmodius and Aristogiton, Brutus and Cassius were concrete examples of such liberty. The true Christian is much more free from all restraints; here below he is a stranger; what boots it to him who is the temporary ruler of this earth, which is not his country? Liberty to him means truth. Jesus was not sufficiently acquainted with history to comprehend how opportune such a doctrine was—the very moment when republican liberty was expiring, and when the small municipal institutions of antiquity were being absorbed in the Roman Empire. But his admirable sound sense and the truly prophetic instinct that he had of his mission, guided him here with marvellous certainty. By these words: "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's, he originated something unknown to politics—a refuge for souls in the midst of an empire of brute force. To be sure, such a doctrine had its dangers. To establish as a principle, that to look at a coin was a symbol of the acknowledg-



ment of legitimate authority, to proclaim that the perfect man contemptuously pays tribute without question, was to annihilate the ancient forms of republicanism and to encourage all kinds of tyranny. Christianity, in this sense, has contributed much to weaken the sense of duty in the citizen, as well as to place the world absolutely in the power of existing circumstances. But in constituting an immense free association, which, during three hundred years, eschewed politics, Christianity amply compensated for the wrong it had done to civic virtue. The power of the State was limited to terrestrial things; the mind was freed, or at all events, the terrible sceptre of Roman authority was broken for ever.

The man who is especially preoccupied with the duties of public life does not spare those who place some other object above his party strifes. He especially blames those who subordinate political to social questions, and profess for the former a sort of indifference. In one sense he is right; for exclusiveness is prejudicial to the good government of human affairs. But what have parties done to promote the general morality of our species? If Jesus, instead of founding his heavenly kingdom, had betaken himself to Rome, and had worn his life out in conspiring against Tiberius, or in regretting Germanicus, what would have become of this world? Neither as a stern republican nor as a zealous patriot could he have stemmed the great public current of his age, though in pool-pooling politics he has revealed to the world, the truth that country is not everything, and that the man is anterior and superior to the citizen.

The principles of our positive science have been injured by the dreams embraced in the scheme of Jesus. We know the history of the world. The kind of revolutions expected by Jesus are only pro-

duced by geological or astronomical causes, and no one has ever been able to connect them with things moral. But to be just to great originators; they must not be fastened with the prejudices they only shared. Columbus discovered America, though he started out with the most erroneous ideas; Newton believed his silly explanation of the Apocalypse to be as certain as his system of the world. Shall we place a mediocre man of our times above a Francis d'Assisi, a St. Bernard, a Joan of Arc, or a Luther because he is exempt from the errors that these persons have taught? Should we measure men by the correctness of their ideas of physics, and by the more or less exact knowledge they possess of the true natural laws of the universe? Let us understand better the position of Jesus and whence he derived his power. The Deism of the eighteenth century and a certain kind of Protestantism have accustomed us to regard the founder of the Christian faith merely as a great moralist, a benefactor of mankind. We see no more in the gospel than good maxims; we throw a convenient veil over the strange intellectual state whence it had its origin. There are some people who regret even that the French Revolution departed more than once from principle, and that it was not brought about by wise and moderate men. Let us not impose our petty plans and commonplace notions on those extraordinary movements which are so far above our grasp! Let us continue to admire the "morality of the Gospel;" let us suppress in our religious teachings the chimera which was the soul of it; but do not let us imagine that with the simple ideas of happiness or of individual morality we can again move the world. The idea of Jesus was much more profound. His was the most revolutionary idea that human brain ever conceived. But it must be taken in its entirety, and not with those timid

suppressions which strip it of the very thing which has rendered it efficacious for the regeneration of humanity.

At bottom, the idea is always a Utopia. When we wish at the present time to represent the Christ of the modern conscience, the consoler, the judge of these times, what do we do? That which Jesus himself did 1830 years ago. We suppose the conditions of the real world quite other than they are; we represent a moral liberator breaking without weapons the chains of the negro, bettering the condition of the common people, delivering oppressed nations. We forget that that implies the subversion of the world. The "restitution of all things" desired by Jesus was not more difficult. That new earth, that new heaven, that new Jerusalem, which comes from above, this cry: "Behold I make all things new," are the characteristics common to reformers. The contrast of the ideal with the sad reality invariably produces in mankind those revolts against cold reason which mediocre minds consider as follies, until the day of their triumph arrives, and then those who have combatted them are the first to acknowledge their great wisdom. That which, in fact, distinguishes Jesus from the agitators of his time and from those of all times, is his perfect idealism. In some respects Jesus was an anarchist, for he had no notion of civil government. The latter seemed to him an abuse, pure and simple. He spoke of it in vague terms, after the manner of one of the commonalty who knows nothing of politics. Every magistrate appeared to him a natural enemy of the people of God; and he forgave his disciples of conflicts with the civil powers without imagining for a moment that there was anything in this to be ashamed of. But the desire to supplant the rich and powerful, never manifests itself in him. His aim is to annihilate wealth and power, but not

to seize upon them. He prepares his disciples for persecutions and punishments, but in no single instance is the idea of armed resistance foreshadowed. The idea that man is all-powerful through suffering and resignation, that man triumphs over force, through purity of heart, is an idea unique with Jesus. Jesus is not a spiritualist; for everything to him had a palpable realization. But he is a thorough idealist, matter being for him but the symbol of the idea, and the real, the vivid expression of that which does not manifest itself.

To whom shall we apply, upon whom shall we rely, to found the kingdom of God? The opinion of Jesus never wavered upon this point. That which is cherished by man is an abomination in the sight of God. The founders of the kingdom of God are the weak and lowly. Neither the rich, the learned, nor the priests; but women, common people, the humble, little children. The grand distinguishing mark of the Messiah is:—"the poor have the gospel preached to them." The idyllic and gentle nature of Jesus here asserted its superiority. A great social revolution, in which rank should be levelled, in which all authority should be brought under, was his dream. The world will not believe him; the world will kill him. But his followers will not be of this world. They will be a small band of the lowly and humble, who will conquer the world by their very humility. The feeling which made the "world" the antithesis of "Christian" has, in the mind of the Master, its full justification.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### JESUS AT CAPERNAUM.

HAUNTED by a more and more imperious and ex-

clusive idea, Jesus, with a quiet determination, henceforth follows the path his extraordinary genius and the circumstances in which he lived have traced out for him. Till now, he had only communicated his thoughts to a few persons who had been secretly drawn towards him; henceforward his teaching was public and sought after. He was now about thirty years of age. The small group of hearers who went with him to John was undoubtedly increased, and perhaps he had been joined by some of the disciples of John. It was with this first nucleus of a church, on his return into Galilee, that he boldly proclaimed the "glad tidings of the kingdom of God." This kingdom was coming; and it was he, Jesus, who was that "Son of Man," that Daniel in his vision had beheld as the divine herald of the final and supreme revelation.

The success of the teaching of the new prophet was this time decisive. A group of men and women, all characterised by the same spirit of juvenile frankness and of simple innocence, adhered to him and said: "Thou art the Messiah!" As the Messiah was to be the Son of David, he was naturally conceded this appellation, which was synonymous with the former. Jesus accepted it with pleasure, although it might cause him some embarrassment, his origin being so well known. For himself, he preferred the title of "Son of Man," an apparently humble title, but it was connected directly with the Messianic hopes. That was the appellation by which he designated himself, although, in his mouth, the "Son of Man" was a synonym of I, which he avoided using. But no one ever thus addressed him, doubtless because the name in question did not quite suit him, until the day of his coming advent.

Jesus' centre of action, at this period of life, was the little town of Capernaum—situated on the shore

of the little town of Gennesareth. The name of Capernaum, into which enters the word *caphar*, village, seems to denote a small town of the olden stamp, in contradistinction to the great towns built according to the Roman fashion, such as Tiberias. The name was so little known, that Josephus, in one place in his writings, takes it for the name of a fountain, the fountain having more celebrity than the village close to it. Like Nazareth, Capernaum had no history, and had not participated in the profane movement favoured by the Herods. Jesus was much attached to this town, and made it a second home. Shortly after his return, he made an unsuccessful experiment upon Nazareth. One of his biographers naïvely remarks, that he could work no miracle there. The knowledge that was possessed of his family—a family of little importance—destroyed his authority. People could not regard as the son of David one, whose brother, sister, and sister-in-law they were seeing every day. Besides, it is undeniable that his family were very decidedly opposed to him, refusing point blank to believe in his mission. The Nazarenes, much more violent, desired, it is said, to kill him by throwing him down from a steep rock. Jesus pointedly retorted that this risk was common to all great men, and applied to himself the proverb—“A prophet hath no honour in his own country.”

This check was far from discouraging him. He returned to Capernaum, where he found the people much more favourably disposed to him, and from there he organized a series of missions into the small surrounding towns. The people of this beautiful and fertile country rarely assembled together except on the Sabbath. This was the day he selected for his teaching. Each town had then a synagogue or place of meeting. It was a rectangular room, not very large, with a portico,

decorated in the Greek style. The Jews not having any architecture of their own, never attempted to give to those edifices an original design. The remains of many ancient synagogues are still to be seen in Galilee. They have all been constructed of large and good materials; but their appearance is rather paltry, owing to the profusion of floral ornaments, foliage, and network, which characterise Jewish edifices. In the interior there were benches, a chair for public reading, and a recess for holding the sacred rolls. These edifices, which had nothing of the temple about them, were the centres of Jewish life. There the people assembled on the Sabbath for prayer, and to listen to the reading of the Law and the Prophets. As Judaism, outside of Jerusalem, had, properly speaking, no clergy, the first to arrive stood up and read the lessons of the day, adding thereto an original commentary, in which he expounded his own views. This was the origin of the "homily," whose finished models we find in the smaller treatises of Philon. The auditors had a right to interrupt and to question the reader; thus, the meeting degenerated quickly into a kind of free discussion assembly. It had a president, "elders," a hazzan—a recognized reader or apparitor, "deputies"—a sort of secretaries or messengers, who conducted the correspondence between the different synagogues—a *shammash* or sacristan. The synagogues were thus veritable small independent worlds, exercising an extended jurisdiction. Like all the municipal corporations up to an advanced period of the Roman Empire, they issued honorary decrees, which had the force of law in the community, pronounced sentences of corporal punishment, which were executed ordinarily by the *hazzan*.

With the marked activity of mind that has always characterised the Jews, such an institution,

despite the arbitrary rigours it tolerated, could not fail to give rise to very animated discussions. Thanks to the synagogues, Judaism had been able to pass unscathed through eighteen centuries of persecution. These were so many little separate worlds, which at once conserved the national spirit, and offered a ready field for intestine struggles. Within the walls of the synagogues was vented an enormous amount of passion. Disputes for precedence there were eager. To have a reserved seat in the first row was the recompense for great piety, or the privilege of wealth which was the most envied. On the other hand, the liberty accorded to every one, of instituting himself reader and expounder of the sacred text, offered wonderful facilities for the propagation of new ideas. This was one of the great opportunities of Jesus, and the means he most often used in laying down his doctrines. He entered the synagogue and stood up to read; the *hazzan* gave him the scroll, which he unrolled, and from which he read the lesson of the day. From this reading he evolved some points bearing his own ideas. As there were few Pharisees in Galilee, the discussion did not assume that degree of animation and that acrimonious tone of opposition which he would have encountered at the very first step at Jerusalem. These good Galileans had never heard homilies so well adapted to their happy dispositions. They admired him, and they encouraged him; they found that he spoke well, and that his reasonings were convincing. He resolved the hardest questions without any difficulty, the charm of his speech and of his person captivated these ingenuous folks, whose minds had not yet been contaminated by the pedantry of the doctors.

Thus, the authority of the young Master increased daily, and, as a matter of course, the more people



believed in him, the more he believed in himself. His sphere, however, was limited. It was confined to the basin of the lake of Tiberias, and even here there was one locality which he preferred. The lake is five or six leagues long and three or four broad; though it has the appearance of an all but perfect oval, it forms, from Tiberias to the mouth of the Jordan, a sort of gulf, whose curve measures about three leagues. This was the field in which the seed sown by Jesus found at length a congenial soil. Let us run over it step by step, and endeavour to raise the mantle of aridity and of desolation with which the demon of Islamism has covered it!

- The first thing we encounter on leaving Tiberias are steep rocks—a mountain which appears to roll into the sea. The mountains then gradually recede, and a plain (*El Ghoueir*), almost level with the sea, opens out. It is a charming grove of rich verdure, furrowed by the plentiful waters which issue partly from a great round reservoir of ancient construction (*Aïn Medawara*). At the entrance to this plain, which is, strictly speaking, the country of Gennesareth, we find the miserable village of *Medjdel*. At the opposite side of the plain (always following the lake) we come upon the site of a town (*Khan Minyeh*) with charming streams, a pretty road, narrow and deep, cut out of the rocks, which Jesus certainly often traversed, and which serves as an outlet into the plain of Gennesareth and to the northern slopes of the lake. A mile from this place the traveller crosses a stream of salt water (*Aïn Sabiga*), issuing from several large springs a few yards from the lake, and entering it through the middle of a dense mass of verdure. After a further journey of forty minutes over the bare slopes which stretches from *Aïn Sabiga* to the mouth of the Jordan, we at last find some huts

and a collection of monumental ruins, called *Tel-Houm*.

Five small towns (which will be as long spoken of by mankind as Rome or Athens) were in the time of Jesus scattered about the space which extends from Medjdel to Tel-Houm. Of these five towns, Magdala, Dalmanutha, Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin, the first alone can to-day be identified with any certainty. The horrible village of Medjdel has doubtless retained the name and the situation of the little town that gave to Jesus his most faithful friend (Mary Magdalene); Dalmanutha was probably close by. Possibly Chorazin was a little more inland, on the north side. As for Bethsaida and Capernaum, conjecture has placed them at Tel-Houm, Ain-et-Lin, Khan-Minyeth, and Medawara. In topography, as in history, it might indeed be said, that a profound design has sought to conceal the traces of the great founder. It is doubtful whether, upon that woefully devastated soil, we shall ever succeed in fixing the spots whence mankind would gladly flock to kiss the imprints of his feet.

The lake, the horizon, the shrubs, the flowers, are all that remain of the little canton, three or four leagues in extent, where Jesus began his Divine work. The trees have totally disappeared. In this country, where the vegetation was formerly so rich that Josephus saw in it a kind of miracle—Nature, according to him, being pleased to bring forth side by side the plants indigenous to cold countries, the products of the torrid zones, the trees of temperate climate, laden all the year round with flowers and fruits—in this country travellers are now obliged to calculate a day beforehand the place where they will on the morrow find a shady nook to sit down to lunch. The lake has become deserted. A solitary, dilapidated barque now ploughs the waves, formerly

the scene of so much activity and of happiness. But the waters are still clear and transparent. The coast, formed of rocks and pebbles, is indeed that of a small sea, not that of a mere pond, like the banks of Lake Huleh. It is clean, sharp, mudless, always beaten on the same spot by the gentle waves. There are small clearly-defined promontories, covered with rose laurels, tamarisks, and prickly caper bushes; at two places especially at the mouth of the Jordan near Sarichea and at the edge of the plain of Gennesareth, there are delightful parterres where the waves ebb and flow over masses of turf and flowers. The Ain-Sabiga brook forms a little estuary, which is full of pretty shells. Flocks of aquatic birds cover the lake. The sky is dazzling with light. The empyrean blue waters, deeply embedded between glittering rocks, appear, when viewed from the summit of the mountains of Safed, to lie at the bottom of a cup of gold. To the north, the snowy ravines of Hermon are traced in white lines upon the sky; to the west, the high undulating plateaux of Gaulonitis and Perea, absolutely barren and clothed by the sun with a kind of velvety atmosphere, form one compact mountain, or rather a long high terrace, which runs from Cæsarea-Philippi as far as the eye can reach to the south. The heat upon the shore is, in summer, very oppressive. The lake occupies a hollow which is over six hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean, and thus is subjected to the torrid conditions of the Dead Sea. A luxurious vegetation tempered in former times these excessive heats. One can hardly understand that a furnace such as the whole lake basin now is, beginning with the month of May, had ever been the scene of marvellous activity. Josephus, however, found the climate very temperate. Undoubtedly, there has been here, as in the *Campagna* of Rome, some change of climate,

attributable to historical causes. It is Islamism, and above all, the Mussulman reaction against the crusades which has withered as with a blast of death, the region preferred by Jesus. The beautiful country of Gennesareth did not suspect that within the brain of this peaceful wayfarer were concealed its destinies.

A dangerous compatriot indeed! He has ruined the country which had the insuperable honour of giving him birth. Coveted by two rival fanaticisms, after it had become the object of universal love or hate, Galilee, as the price of its glory, has been changed into a desert. But who will say that Jesus would have been happier if he had lived in obscurity in his own village until he had reached the age of mature manhood? and as for the ungrateful Nazarenes, who would ever think of them, if one of their number had not, at the risk of compromising the future prosperity of their town, discovered his Father and proclaimed himself the Son of God?

At the time of which we speak, four or five large villages, situated about half an hour's walk from one another, formed the little world of Jesus. He seems never to have visited Tiberias, a corrupt city, peopled for the most part by Pagans, and the permanent residence of Antipas. Sometimes, however, he wandered forth of his favourite region. For instance, he went by boat along the eastern shore to Gergesa. In the north, we find him at Paneas, Cæsarea-Philippi, and at the foot of Mount Hermon. Finally, he made a journey to Tyre and Sidon, a country which at that time must have been in an exceedingly flourishing condition. In all these countries he was surrounded with paganism. At Cæsarea he saw the celebrated grotto of *Panium*, which was considered the source of the Jordan, and around which popular belief had entwined many legends; he could admire the marble temple that

Herod had erected near there in honour of Augustus; he stopped probably before the numerous votive statues erected to Pan, to the Nymphs, to the Echo of the Grotto, which piety had already accumulated in this beautiful spot. The rationalistic Jew, accustomed to look on strange gods for deified men or for demons, had come to consider all these symbolical representations as idols. The attractions of naturalistic worship, which carried away the more sanguine races, did not move him. It is undoubted that he had no knowledge of what the ancient sanctuary of Melkarth at Tyre might still contain of a primitive worship more or less analogous to that of the Jews. Paganism, which, in Phœnicia, had raised on every hill a temple and a sacred grove—outward evidences of great industry and vulgar riches—hardly elicited a smile from him. Monotheism takes away the capacity of understanding pagan religions. A Mussulman suddenly introduced into polytheistic countries seems to have no eyes. Certainly, Jesus learned nothing in these journeys. He always came back to his beloved coast of Gennesareth. The centre of his thoughts was there, and there he found faith and love.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS.

IN this earthly paradise, which the great historic revolutions had, up till then, affected but little, there lived a people in perfect harmony with the country itself—active, honest, light and tender-hearted. The lake of Tiberias is one of the best fishing-grounds in the world. Very productive

fisheries had been established, particularly at Bethsaida and Capernaum, and had created a certain opulence. These fisherman families formed a gentle and peaceable society, and by means of numerous ties of relationship, extending over the whole lake region, we have named. Their comparatively idle lives left their imagination quite free. The notions about the kingdom of God found, amongst these small coteries of good people, more credence than anywhere else. Nothing that we call civilization, in the Greek or worldly sense, had yet penetrated their midst. Nor had they any of our German and Celtic earnestness; but although their goodness was often, perhaps, wholly superficial, their manners were quiet, and they had a certain amount of intelligence and shrewdness. We can imagine them as being somewhat similar to the better population of the Lebanons, but with the faculty, which the latter lacked, of producing great men. Jesus met there his true kindred. He installed himself as one of them. Capernaum became "his own city," and in the midst of the little circle which adored him, he forgot his sceptical brothers, ungrateful Nazareth and its mocking incredulity.

One house especially, at Capernaum, offered him an agreeable asylum and devoted disciples. It was that of two brothers, sons of one Jonas, who was probably dead at the time when Jesus came to fix his abode upon the shores of the lake. These two brothers were Simon, surnamed Cephas or Peter, and Andrew. Born at Bethsaida, they had established themselves at Capernaum when Jesus entered on public life. Peter was married and had two children, and his mother-in-law lived with him. Jesus loved that house, and resided there constantly. Andrew appears to have been a disciple of John the Baptist, and Jesus had probably become acquainted with him on the banks of the Jordan.

The two brothers, even at the time when it seemed they were most occupied with their Master, continued always to follow the calling of fishermen. Jesus, who delighted in playing upon words, said sometimes that he would make them fishers of men. In fact, among all his disciples, none of them were more firmly attached to him. Another family; that of Zabdia or Zebedee, a well-to-do fisherman and the owner of several boats, extended to Jesus a hearty welcome. Zebedee had two sons; James, who was the elder, and a younger son, John, who later on was destined to play so important a part in the history of infant Christianity. Both were zealous disciples. Salome, wife of Zebedee, was also strongly attached to Jesus, and accompanied him till his death.

The women, in fact, received him very gladly. He had in their society those reserved manners which render a very agreeable union of ideas between the two sexes possible. The separation of men and women which has checked all refined development among the peoples of the East was, undoubtedly, then, as in our day, much less rigorous in the country and in the villages than in the large towns. Three or four devoted Galilean women always accompanied the young Master, and disputed among themselves for the pleasure of listening to him and of attending on him in turn. These women imported into the new sect an enthusiastic element, as well as something of the marvellous, the importance of which was already felt. One of them, Mary Magdalene, who has made the name of her poor native town so celebrated in the world, appears to have been a very excitable person. In the language of the time, she had been possessed of seven devils: that is to say, she had been afflicted with nervous and apparently inexplicable maladies. Jesus, by his unspotted and gentle loveliness, calmed

that troubled nature. The Magdalene remained faithful to him even to Golgotha, and on the day but one following his death played a most important part, for, as we shall see later on, she was the principal medium through which was established faith in the resurrection. Joanna, wife of Chuza, one of the attendants of Antipas, Susannah, and others whose names are unknown, accompanied him constantly and ministered unto him. Some of them were rich, and placing their fortunes at the disposal of the young Master, put him in a position to live without having to follow the occupation to which he had been brought up.

There were still many others who followed him habitually and recognised him as their Master:—one Philip of Bethsaida, Nathaniel, son of Tolmai or Ptolemy, of Cana, perhaps a disciple of the first period, and probably the person who was the Xenophon of infant Christianity. He had been a publican, and as such, handled with greater facility the *kalam* than the others. It was then probably that he began to think of writing those memoirs which are the bases of that which we know of the teachings of Jesus. Others of the disciples were Thomas, or Didymus, who, though he doubted sometimes, was warm-hearted, and a man of generous impulses; one Lebbæus or Thaddeus; Simon the Canaanite, who was, perhaps, a disciple of Judas the Gaulonite, belonging to the party of the *Renaim*, which was formed at that time, and which was soon to play so great a part in the affairs of the Jewish nation; lastly, Judas, son of Saxon, of the city of Iscariot, who was the black sheep of the faithful flock, and who acquired such unenviable renown. He was the only one of them who was not a Galilean. Kerioth was a town at the extreme south of the tribe of Judah, a day's journey beyond Hebron.



We have seen that the family of Jesus was far from being well-disposed towards him. Nevertheless James and Jude, his cousins, by Mary Cleophas, became from that time his disciples, and Mary Cleophas herself was one of the women who followed him to Calvary. At this period we do not read of his mother being with him. It is only after the death of Jesus that Mary becomes of great importance, and that the disciples seek to attach her to themselves. It is then, too, that the members of the family of the founder, under the appellation of brothers of Jesus, form an influential group, which for long was at the head of the church at Jerusalem, and which after the sack of the city sought refuge in Batanea. The simple fact of having been on terms of intimacy with him became a decided advantage, just as, after the death of Mahomet, the wives and daughters of the prophet, who were of no account during his lifetime, became great authorities.

In this friendly throng Jesus had avowedly his favourites, and a select circle of confidants. The two sons of Zebedee, James and John, appear to have formed part of the latter. They were full of fire and passion. Jesus had uniquely designated them "sons of thunder," on account of their excessive zeal, a zeal if it had had the control of the thunder would have made too frequent use of it. John, in particular, appears to have been on a certain footing of familiarity with Jesus. Perhaps the numerous and active school which later on attached themselves to this disciple, the records of which are to be found in his recollections, (*souvenirs*) has exaggerated the warm attachment that the Master bore for him. But what is more significant is, that in the synoptical Gospels, Simon Barjona, or Peter, James, son of Zebedee, and John his brother, formed a sort of inner council, which

Jesus called together at certain times when he had reason to challenge the faith and the intelligence of the others. It appears, besides, that all three were associated as fishermen. The affection of Jesus for Peter was deep. The character of that disciple—upright, sincere, impulsive—pleased Jesus, who sometimes allowed himself to smile at his eager manner. Peter, who was not much of a mystic, communicated to the Master his simple doubts, his dislikes, his human weaknesses, with an honest unreserve that recalls that of Joinville towards St. Denis. Jesus, full of confidence and esteem, reproved him in a friendly manner. As regards John, his youth, his exquisite tenderness of heart, and his lively imagination, must have possessed a great charm. The individuality of that extraordinary man, which imprinted itself so deeply on primitive Christianity, did not develop itself till afterwards.

No hierarchy, strictly speaking, existed in this infant sect. They were to call each other "brothers," and Jesus absolutely proscribed titles of superiority, such as *rabbi*, "master," "father," he alone being Master, and God alone being Father. The greatest was to be the servant of the others. Nevertheless, Simon Barjona distinguished himself among his fellows by a certain personal importance. Jesus lived with him and discoursed from his boat; his house was the head-quarters of evangelical preaching. In public, he was regarded as chief of the band, and it was to him that the superintendent of the tax collectors addressed himself for payment of the taxes due by the sect. Simon was the first to acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah. In a moment of unpopularity, when Jesus demanded of his disciples: "Will ye also go away?" Simon answered: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." At various times

Jesus gave him a certain priority, and conferred on him the Syriac surname of *Képha* (stone) wishing to signify thereby that he would make him the corner-stone of the building. At one time, he seems to promise him "the keys of the kingdom of Heaven," and to accord him the right of pronouncing upon earth decisions to be ratified always in eternity. No doubt this preference given to Peter excited not a little jealousy. In view of the future, particularly, was this jealousy kindled—in view of that kingdom of God, in which all the disciples would be seated on thrones, at the right and the left of the Master, in order to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. They demanded of him, who should then be the nearest to the "Son of Man," acting in some sort as his first minister and assessor. The two sons of Zebedee aspired to these positions. Filled with such a thought they induced their mother, Salome, who one day took Jesus apart, to ask him for the two highest places for her sons.

Jesus evaded the request by repeating his habitual maxim that he who exalteth himself shall be brought low, and that the kingdom of heaven will be possessed by the meek and lowly. This created some stir in the band; and there was ill-feeling manifested against James and John. The same spirit of rivalry is frequently seen in the Gospel of John, in which the writer is never tired of declaring himself to be "the beloved disciple," and the one to whom the Master in dying confided the care of his mother, who seeks to place himself near Simon Peter—nay, sometimes before him—in important situations in which the older evangelists omitted to mention him. Among the persons above mentioned, every one of them, of which we know anything, commenced life as a fisherman. At all events, none of them belonged

to a socially elevated class. Matthew or Levi, son of Alphæus, alone had been a publican. But those to whom that name was given in Judæa were not the farmers general [of taxes], who were men of exalted rank (always Roman patricians), and called at Rome *publicanni*. They were the agents of the farmers-general, subordinate servants, simple customs officers. The great route from Acre to Damascus, one of the most ancient routes in the world, which traversed Galilee skirting the lake, increased greatly the number of this class of employées there. At Capernaum, which was probably on the line of the route, there was a numerous staff. That occupation has never been popular; but amongst the Jews it was regarded as wholly criminal. Taxation, which was new to them, was the symbol of their vassalage. One school, that of Judas the Gaulonite, maintained that to pay taxes was an act of paganism. The customs officers, moreover, were abhorred by the zealots of the Law. They were only spoken of in conjunction with assassins, highway robbers, and people of infamous character. Jews who accepted such positions were excommunicated and rendered incapable of making a will; their money was accursed, and the casuists forbade its being exchanged. These poor people, placed under the ban of society, lived by themselves apart. Jesus accepted an invitation to dine at the house of Levi, at which were present, according to the language of the times, "many publicans and sinners." That was a great scandal. In those proscribed houses one ran the risk of meeting wicked society. We shall often see him in this position—careless in regard to shocking the prejudices of well-disposed persons, seeking to elevate the ignorant classes by means of the orthodox, and thus exposing himself to the most cutting reproaches of the zealots.

Jesus owed these numerous conquests to an infinite charm of person and of speech. One penetrating word, one look falling upon a simple conscience, which was only waiting to be aroused, made such a one an ardent disciple. Sometimes Jesus made use of an innocent artifice, which was also employed by Joan of Arc. He pretended to have an intimate knowledge of something affecting the person he wished to gain over, or he would recall some circumstance dear to that person's heart. It was in this way that he touched Nathaniel, Peter, and the Samaritan woman. Dissimulating the real source of his power—I mean his superiority to his surroundings—he allowed it to be believed, in order to satisfy the aspirations of the times—aspirations, moreover, which he fully shared—that a revelation from on high had disclosed to him the secrets and the workings of hearts. Everybody imagined that he moved in a higher sphere than that of mankind. It was said that he spoke with Moses and Elias upon the mountains; it was believed that in those moments of solitude the angels came and ministered unto him, and established a supernatural intercourse between heaven and earth.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### PREACHINGS ON THE LAKE.

SUCH was the group which, on the borders of the Lake of Tiberias, surrounded Jesus. ~~The~~ aristocracy was represented there by a customs-officer and the wife of a steward. The rest were composed of fishermen and common people. They were extremely ignorant; their intellect was feeble. They believed in apparitions and ghosts. Not one

particle of Greek culture had penetrated this chief circle. Moreover, their Jewish instruction was very imperfect; but they were full of heart and good will. The beautiful climate of Galilee rendered the existence of these honest fishermen a perpetual enjoyment. They were a true prelude to the kingdom of God—simple, good, happy—rocked gently on their charming little sea, or sleeping at nights on its coasts. One cannot realize the intoxication of a life which thus glides away under the canopy of heaven; the feelings, now gentle, now ardent, produced by this continual contact with nature; the dreams of those starry nights, under the infinite expanse of the azure dome. It was during such a night that Jacob, with his head resting on a stone, beheld in the stars the promise of an innumerable posterity, and the mysterious ladder reaching from earth to heaven, by which the angels ascended and descended. At the time of Jesus heaven was not shut nor the earth grown cold. The cloud still opened above the Son of Man; the angels ascended and descended upon his head; visions of the kingdom were reported everywhere, for the reason that man carried them in his heart. The clear and mild eyes of those simple souls contemplated the universe in its divine origin. The world probably discovered its secret to the divinely-enlightened consciences of these happy children, whose purity of heart merited that one day they should see God.

Jesus lived with his disciples almost always in the open air. Sometimes he entered a boat and taught the multitudes assembled on the shore. Sometimes he sat upon the mountains which skirted the lake, where the air was so pure and the sky so luminous. The faithful band led thus a gay and roaming life, receiving the inspirations of the Master fresh from his lips. An innocent doubt

was now and then started, some mildly sceptical question raised. A smile or a look from Jesus sufficed to silence the objection. At each step—in the passing cloud, in the sprouting seed, in the ripening corn—they descried a sign of the kingdom which was at hand. They believed they were about to see God, and to become the masters of the world. Tears were turned into joy—it was the advent of “peace on earth” (*universelle consolation*). “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. v., 3—10).

His preaching was unimpassioned and pleasing, redolent of nature and of the perfume of the fields. He loved the flowers, and drew from them his most charming lessons. The birds of the air, the sea, the mountains, the frolics of children, were introduced by turn into his discourses. His style had nothing of the Greek period about it, but resembled much more the turn of the Hebrew parabolists, and in particular the sentences of the Jewish doctors, his contemporaries, which are to be found in the *Pirke Aboth*. His expositions were not very extended; they formed a species of sorites after the manner of the Koran, which being put together, constituted later on those long discourses which were written by Matthew. No note of transition linked together these diverse fragments. In general, however, the same inspiration pervaded them all and gave them

inity. It was in the parable, especially, that the Master excelled. Nothing in Judaism could have served him as a model for that charming style. It was a creation of his. No doubt there are to be found in Buddhist books some parables precisely of the same tone and of the same form as the Gospel parables. But it is hard to allow that a Buddhist influence had any effect on them. The spirit of kindness and of deep sentiment which animated equally primitive Christianity and Buddhism is, perhaps, sufficient to explain these similarities.

A total indifference to exterior life and to the vain apparel called "comfortable," which our bleaker climates render imperative, were the results of the innocent and sweet lives passed in Galilee. Cold climates, by bringing man and the outer world into perpetual conflict, have caused too much store to be set by researches after comfort and luxury. On the other hand, the climates which awaken fewer desires are the countries of idealism and of poetry. The accessories of life are there insignificant as compared to the pleasure of living. The adornment of dwellings is there superfluous, for people remain within doors as little as possible. The strong and regularly-served food of less generous countries would be looked upon as heavy and disagreeable. And, as for the luxury of clothing, what can equal that which God has given to the earth and to the birds of the air? Labour, in climates of this description, seems useless; what it affords is not worth what it costs. The animals of the field are better clothed than the most opulent of men, and they toil not. This contempt, when it does not proceed from idleness, serves to elevate the souls of men, inspired Jesus with some charming apologues. "Lay not up for yourselves," said he, "treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal;



for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, ~~what~~ ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek): for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. vi., 19—34).

This essentially Galilean sentiment had a decisive influence upon the destinies of the primitive sect. The happy band, trusting to its Heavenly Father to supply its wants, held, as a fundamental principle, the cares of life to be an evil, which extinguished in man the germ of all that was good. Each day it

asked of God the bread for the morrow. Wherefore lay up treasure? The kingdom of God is at hand. "Sell that ye have and give alms," said the Master; "provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not." What more nonsensical than for one to heap up treasures for heirs one shall never see! As an example of human folly, Jesus loved to cite the case of a man who, when he had enlarged his barns and laid up goods for many years, died before having enjoyed them. Brigandage, which was deeply rooted in Galilee, added much force to this point of view. The poor, who could not suffer from it, came to regard themselves as the favoured of God; whilst the rich, whose possessions were so unsafe, were the people actually disinherited. In our communities, established upon a very rigorous idea in regard to property, the position of the poor is wretched; they have not the right to a spot under the sun. There are no flowers, no grass, no shade except for the one who possesses the earth. In the Orient these are the gifts of God, which belong to no one. The landlord has but a slender privilege; nature is the patrimony of all.

Further, primitive Christianity in those things was only following in the footsteps of the Essenes, or Therapeutæ, and of the Jewish sects founded on the monastic life. A communistic element pervaded all those sects, which were looked upon with disfavour equally by Pharisees and Sadducees. The Messianic beliefs, which, among the orthodox Jews wore a wholly political aspect, had for the two sects just named a purely social meaning. By means of an easy, regulated, and contemplative mode of life, leaving each individual freedom of action, these small churches thought to inaugurate on earth the Kingdom of Heaven. Dreams of a blessed life, founded upon the fraternity of man

and the worship of the true God engrossed exalted intellects, which resulted in bold and sincere attempts being made everywhere to give these Utopias a practical shape, but all of which proved abortive.

Jesus, whose relations with the Essenes it is very difficult to make out (resemblances in history do not always imply relations) was in this unquestionably, at one with them. Community of goods was for some time the rule in the new society. Avarice was the cardinal sin. Now, it is necessary to remark that the sin of "avarice," against which moral Christianity has been so severe, was then the mere attachment to property. The first condition of being a disciple of Jesus was to sell one's property and give the proceeds to the poor. Those who recoiled from that step were not admitted into the community of the saints. Jesus often repeated that he who finds the kingdom of God must buy it at the sacrifice of all his goods, and that in doing so he makes an advantageous exchange. "Again: The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again: The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he hath found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (Matt. xiii., 44—46). But, alas! The inconveniences of this method were not long in making themselves felt. A treasurer was required. Judas of Kerioth was chosen for the office. Rightly or wrongly, he was accused of stealing from the common purse: but of this there was no doubt—he came to a bad end. Sometimes the Master, better versed in things pertaining to Heaven than in those belonging to earth, taught a political economy yet more remark-

able. In a fanciful parable, a steward is praised for having made friends amongst the poor at the expense of the rich, so that the poor in turn might introduce him into the kingdom of Heaven. The poor, in fact, having become the dispensers of this kingdom, would not admit any one to it unless those who had given them something. "And the Pharisees also, who were covetous," says the Evangelist, "heard all these things; and they derided him." Did they also hear the remarkable parable which follows?—"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom: and he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented" (Matt. xvi., 19—25). What could be more just? Later on this was denominated the parable of the "wicked rich man." But it is purely and simply the parable of the rich man. He is in hell because he is rich, because he does not give his goods to the poor, because he dines well, whilst others at his door fare badly. Finally, Jesus, in a less extravagant moment, does not insist on the obligation of selling one's goods and of giving them to the poor,

except as suggesting perfection; but he nevertheless makes this terrible declamation:—"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

In all this, a very admirable sentiment dominated the mind of Jesus, as well as the minds of the band of joyous children which accompanied him, and made him the true source of the peace of the soul for eternity, and the grand consoler of life. In disengaging men from what he called "the cares of this world" Jesus may have gone to excess, and struck at the conditions essential to human society; but he founded that high spirituality which has during centuries filled souls with joy in passing through this vale of tears. He saw quite clearly that man's inattention, his want of philosophy and morality proceeded most often from the amusements he indulges in, from the cares which assail him, and which are multiplied beyond measure by civilization. Hence, the Gospel has been the supreme remedy for the weariness of ordinary life, a perpetual *sursum corda*, a powerful distraction from the miserable cares of the world, a gentle appeal like that of Jesus to the ear of Martha: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful." Thanks to Jesus, existence the most gloomy, the most absorbed by sad and humiliating duties, has been cheered by a glimpse of heaven! In our troublous civilizations, the recollection of the free life led in Galilee is like perfume from another world, like the "dew of Hermon," which has prevented barrenness and vulgarity from pervading entirely the field of God.

## CHAPTER X.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD CONCEIVED AS THE INHERITANCE  
OF THE POOR.

THESE maxims—good to a country in which life is nurtured by the air and the light, and that delicate communism of a band of children of God, leaning with confidence on the bosom of their father—might suit a simple sect which was firmly of the belief that its dreams were about to be realized. But it is evident they did not satisfy the whole of the society. Jesus, in fact, soon perceived that the official world of his time would on no account tolerate his kingdom. He therefore took his resolution with extreme boldness. Putting the world, with its unfeeling heart and its narrow prejudices on one side, he turned towards the simple ones. A great substitution of one class for another must take place. The kingdom of God is made; 1st, for children and for those who resemble them; 2nd, for the outcast of this world, victims of that social arrogance which repels the good though humble man; 3rd, for heretics and schismatics, publicans, Samaritans, and Pagans of Tyre and Sidon. A forcible parable explained and justified that appeal to the people. A king prepares a wedding feast, and sends his servants to seek out those that are invited. Each one of the invited excuses himself; some even maltreat the messengers. The king thereupon takes firm measures. The fashionable people have rejected his invitation. Be it so; he will have the first comers instead, the people collected from the highways and byeways, the poor, the beggars, the lame, it matters not; the room must be filled. "I say unto you," said the king,

"that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

Pure Ebionism, that is, the doctrine that the poor (ebionism) alone shall be saved, that the kingdom of the poor is at hand was, then, the doctrine of Jesus. "Woe unto you that are rich," said he, "for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep" (Luke vi., 24, 25). "Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luke xiv., 12—14). It is, in an analogous sense, perhaps, that he often repeated, "Be good bankers"—that is to say, make good investments for the kingdom of God, in giving your wealth to the poor, conformably to the old proverb, "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord" (Prov. xix. 17).

But this was no new fact. The most exalted democratic movement, the memory of which has been preserved by mankind (the only one, also, that has succeeded, for it alone has maintained itself in the domain of pure thought) had agitated for a long time the Jewish race. The notion that God is the avenger of the poor and of the weak against the rich and powerful, is found in every page of the books of the Old Testament. The history of Israel is, of all histories, that in which the popular notions have most certainly predominated. The prophets, the truest, and in a sense the boldest, tribunes had thundered incessantly against the great, and had

established a close relation between the terms "rich, impious, violent, wicked," on the one hand, and between "poor, gentle, humble, pious" on the other. Under the Selucidæ, the aristocracy having almost all apostatised and gone over to Hellenism, these associations of ideas were but strengthened. The Book of Enoch contains even fiercer maledictions against the world, the rich, and the powerful than those of the Gospels. In this book luxury is held up as a crime. The "Son of Man," in that fantastic apocalypse, dethrones kings, tears them away from their voluptuous life and plunges them into hell. The initiation of Judæa into profane life, the recent introduction of an exclusively worldly element of luxury and of comfort, provoked a violent reaction in favour of patriarchal simplicity. "Woe unto you who despise the humble dwelling and inheritance of your fathers! Woe unto you who build your palaces with the sweat of others! Each stone, each brick of which it is built is a sin." The word "poor" (*ebion*) had become a synonym of "saint," of "friend of God." This was the appellation the Galilean disciples of Jesus loved to give one another: it was for a long time the designation of the Judaizing Christians of Batanea, and of the Hauran (*Nazarenes*, *Hebrews*) who remained faithful to the language as well as to the earlier teachings of Jesus, and who boasted of having amongst them the descendants of his family. At the end of the second century these devout sectaries, who had lived outside the path of the great current that had carried away the other churches, were treated as heretics (*Ebionites*), and in order to explain their name a pretended heresiarch, *Ebion*, was invented.

In fact, we may see, without difficulty, that this exaggerated taste for poverty could not be very lasting. It was one of those Utopian elements which



always mingle in the origin of great movements, and which time rectifies. Thrown into the centre of human society, Christianity very easily consented to receive rich men into her bosom, just as Buddhism, exclusively monkish in its origin, soon began, as conversions multiplied, to admit the laity. But the mark of origin is ever preserved. Although it quickly passed away and became forgotten, Ebionism left a leaven in the whole history of Christian institutions which has not been lost. The collection of the principal discourses of Jesus was made in the Ebionitish centre of Batanea. "Poverty" remained an ideal from which the true followers of Jesus were never after separated. To possess nothing was the truly evangelical state; mendicancy became a virtue, a holy condition. The great Umbrian movement of the thirteenth century, which, among all the attempts at religious construction, most resembles the Galilean movement, took place entirely in the name of poverty. Francis d'Assissi, the man who, more than any other, by his exquisite goodness, by his delicate, pure, and tender communion with universal life, most resembled Jesus, was a poor man. The mendicant orders, the innumerable communistic sects of the middle ages (*Pauvres de Lyon, Bégards, Bons-Hommes, Fratricelles, Humiliés, Pauvres évangéliques, &c.*) grouped under the banner of the "Everlasting Gospel," pretended to be, and in fact were, the true disciples of Jesus. But even in this instance the most impracticable dreams of the new religion were fruitful in results. Pious mendicity, so impatiently borne by our industrial and well-organised communities, was in its day, and in a suitable climate, full of charm. It offered to a multitude of mild and contemplative souls the only condition suited to them. To have made poverty an object of love and desire, to have raised the beggar to the altar,

and to have sanctified the coat of the poor man, was a master-stroke which political economy may not appreciate, but in the presence of which the true moralist cannot remain indifferent. Humanity, in order to bear its burden, needs to believe that it is not paid entirely by wages. The greatest service which can be rendered to it is to repeat often that it lives not by bread alone.

Like all great men, Jesus loved the people, and felt himself at home with them. The Gospel, in his view, is made for the poor; it is to them he brings the glad tidings of salvation. All the despised ones of orthodox Judaism were his favourites. Love of the people, and pity for their weaknesses (the sentiment of the democratic chief, who feels the spirit of the multitude live in him, and recognise him as its natural interpreter), shine forth at each moment in his acts and discourses.

The chosen flock presented, in fact, a very mixed character, and one likely to astonish rigorous moralists. It counted in its fold men with whom a Jew, respecting himself, would not have associated. Perhaps Jesus found in this society; unrestrained by ordinary rules, more mind and heart than in a pedantic and formal middle class, proud of its apparent morality. The Pharisees, exaggerating the Mosaic prescriptions, had come to believe themselves defiled by contact with men less strict than themselves; in their meals they almost rivalled the senseless distinctions of caste in India. Jesus, despising these miserable aberrations of the religious sentiment, loved to eat with those who suffered on account of them; by his side at table were to be found persons said to lead wicked lives, perhaps solely from the fact that they did not share the follies of the false devotees. The Pharisees and the doctors cried out against the scandal. "See," said they, "with what men he eats!"

Jesus returned subtle answers, exasperating the hypocrites: "They that be whole need not a physician." Or again; "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing." Or again: "The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." Or once more: "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners." Lastly, that delightful parable of the Prodigal Son, in which he who has fallen is represented as having a sort of privilege of love over him who has always been just. Weak or guilty women, surprised at so much that was charming, and perceiving, for the first time, the great attractions of contact with virtue, approached him freely. People were astonished that he did not repulse them. "Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner." Jesus rejoined with the parable of a creditor who forgives his debtors' unequal debts, and he did not hesitate to prefer the lot of him to whom was remitted the greater debt. He appreciated conditions of soul only in proportion to the love contained therein. Women, with sorrowful hearts, and disposed on account of their sins to feelings of humility, were nearer to his kingdom than ordinary natures, who often are deserving of little credit for not having fallen. On the other hand, we can conceive that these tender souls, finding in their conversion to the sect an easy means of rehabilitation, would passionately attach themselves to him.

Far from seeking to soften the murmurs raised by his disdain for the social susceptibilities of the

time, he seemed to take pleasure in exciting them. Never did any one avow more loftily this contempt for the "world," which is the essential condition of great things and of great originality. He pardoned the rich man only when the rich man, because of some prejudice, was disliked by society. He much preferred men of questionable lives and who had little consideration in the eyes of the orthodox leaders. "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him." We can understand how galling the reproach of not having followed the good example set by prostitutes would be to men making a profession of seriousness and of rigid morality.

He had no outward affectation or show of austerity. He did not eschew pleasure; he went willingly to marriage feasts. One of his miracles was performed to enliven a wedding feast at a small town. In the East weddings take place in the evening. Each person carries a lamp; and the lights coming and going produce a very agreeable effect. Jesus liked this gay and animated scene, and drew parables from it. Such levity, compared with that of John the Baptist, gave offence. One day, when the disciples of John and the Pharisees were observing the fast, it was asked, "Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they shall fast in those days." His gentle gaiety found expression in lively reflections and amiable pleasantries. "But whereunto," said he, "shall I liken this genera-

tion? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying,

“ We have piped unto you,  
And ye have not danced ;  
We have mourned unto you,  
And ye have not lamented.

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But Wisdom is justified of her children.”

He thus wandered through Galilee in the midst of a continual feast. He rode on a mule (which in the East is a good and safe mode of travelling) ; whose large black eyes, shaded by long eyelashes, give it an expression of gentleness. His disciples sometimes disposed themselves around him with a kind of rustic pomp, at the expense of their garments, which they used as carpets. They placed them on the mule which carried him, or spread them on the earth in his path. When he entered a house it was considered a joy and a blessing. He halted in the villages and at the large farms, where he received an eager hospitality. In the East, when a stranger enters a house it becomes at once a public place. All the village assembles there ; the children invade it ; they are put out by the servants, but always return. Jesus could not suffer these innocent auditors to be treated harshly ; he caused them to be brought to him and embraced them. The mothers, encouraged by such treatment, brought him their children in order that he might touch them. Women came to pour oil upon his head, and perfume on his feet. His disciples sometimes repulsed them as importunates ; but Jesus, who loved ancient usages and everything that

indicated simplicity of heart, rectified the ill done by his too zealous friends. He protected those who wished to honour him. In this way children and women came to adore him. The reproach of alienating from their families these harmless creatures, always ready to be led astray, was one of the most frequent charges of his enemies.

The infant religion was thus in many respects confined to women and children. The latter were like a young guard around Jesus for the inauguration of his innocent royalty, and made him little ovations which much pleased him, calling him "son of David," crying *Hosanna*, and bearing palms around him. Jesus was very glad to see these young apostles, who did not compromise him, rush to the front and give him titles which he dared not take himself. He let them speak, and when he was asked if he heard, he replied evasively that the praise which fell from young lips was the most agreeable to God.

He lost no opportunity of repeating that the little ones are sacred beings, that the kingdom of God belongs to children, that we must become children to enter there, that we ought to receive it as a child, that the heavenly Father hides his secrets from the wise, and reveals them to babes. The notion of disciples in his mind is almost synonymous with that of children. Once, when they had one of those quarrels for precedence which were not uncommon, Jesus took a little child, placed him in their midst, and said to them, "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

• It was infancy, in fact, in its divine freshness, in its simple bewilderments of joy, which took possession of the earth. Every one believed that the kingdom so much desired might appear at any

moment. Each one already saw himself seated on a throne beside the Master. They divided the places amongst themselves, they strove to reckon the precise date of its advent. The latter was called the "Good Tidings;" the doctrine had no other name. An old word, "*paradise*" which the Hebrew, like all the languages of the East, had borrowed from the Persian, and which at first designated the parks of the Achæmenidæ kings, summed up the general dream; a delightful garden, in which the charming life led here below would be continued for ever. How long this intoxication lasted we know not. No one, during the course of this magical apparition, measured time any more than we measure a dream. Duration was suspended; a week was as an age. But whether it filled years or months, the dream was so beautiful that humanity has lived upon it ever since, and it is still our consolation to gather its weakened perfume. Never did so much joy fill the bosom of man. For one moment humanity, in the most vigorous effort she ever made to rise above the world, forgot the leaden weight which pressed her to earth and the sorrows of the life below. Happy the one who has been able to behold this divine unfolding, and to enjoy, though but for one day, this unexampled illusion? But more happy still, Jesus would say to us, is he who, freed from all illusion, shall reproduce in himself the celestial vision, and, with no millenarian dream, no chimerical paradise, no signs in the heavens, but by the uprightness of his will and the poetry of his soul, shall be able to create anew in his heart the true kingdom of God!

## CHAPTER XI.

EMBASSY FROM JOHN IN PRISON TO JESUS—DEATH OF  
JOHN—RELATIONS OF HIS SCHOOL TO THAT OF JESUS.

WHILST joyous Galilee was celebrating in feasts the coming of the well-beloved, the sad John, in his prison of Machero, was pining away with expectation and desire. The success of the young master whom he had seen some months before as his auditor reached him. It was said that the Messiah, predicted by the prophets, he who was to re-establish the kingdom of Israel, was come, and was demonstrating his presence in Galilee by marvellous works. John wished to enquire into the truth of this rumour, and as he was allowed to communicate freely with his disciples, he chose two of them to go to Jesus in Galilee.

The two disciples found Jesus at the height of his fame. The appearance of happiness which reigned around him, surprised them. Accustomed to fasts, to earnest prayer, and to a life full of aspirations, they were astonished to see themselves suddenly transported into the midst of welcome rejoicings. They told Jesus their message: Art thou he that should come? Or do we look for another? Jesus, who from that time hesitated no longer respecting his peculiar character as Messiah, enumerated to them the works which ought to characterise the coming of the kingdom of God—such as the healing of the sick, and the good tidings of a salvation near at hand preached to the poor. He did all these works. “And blessed is he,” said Jesus, “whosoever shall not be offended in me.”

We do not know whether this answer reached



John the Baptist, or in what temper it put the austere ascetic. Did he die consoled and certain that he whom he had announced already lived, or did he retain the same doubts as to the mission of Jesus? There is nothing to inform us. Seeing, however, that his school continued to exist a considerable time side by side with the Christian churches, we are constrained to believe that, notwithstanding his regard for Jesus, John did not regard him as the one who was to realize the divine promises. Death came, moreover, to end his perplexities. The untamable freedom of the ascetic was to crown his restless and stormy career by the only end which was worthy of it.

The indulgence which Antipas had at first shown towards John was not of long duration. In the conversations which, according to the Christian tradition, John had had with the tetrarch, he did not cease repeating to him that his marriage was unlawful, and that he ought to send Herodias away. We can easily imagine the hatred which the granddaughter of Herod the Great must have engendered against this importunate counsellor. She only waited an opportunity to ruin him.

Her daughter, Salome, by her first marriage, and like her ambitious and dissolute, entered into her designs. That year (probably the year 30), Antipas was at Machero on the anniversary of his birthday. Herod the Great had had constructed in the interior of the fortress a magnificent palace, in which the tetrarch frequently resided. He gave a great feast there, during which Salome executed one of those character dances which were not considered in Syria as unbecoming a distinguished person. Antipas, being greatly delighted, asked the dancer what she most desired, and at the instigation of her mother replied, "Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger." Antipas was sorry, but he could not

refuse. A guard took the charger, went and cut off the head of the prisoner, and brought it.

The disciples of the Baptist obtained his body and placed it in a tomb. The people were much offended. Six years later, Hareth, having attacked Antipas, in order to recover Machero and avenge the dishonour of his daughter, Antipas was completely beaten; and his defeat was generally regarded as a punishment for the murder of John.

The news of John's death was brought to Jesus by the disciples of the Baptist. The last step John had taken in regard to Jesus had succeeded in establishing between the two schools the most intimate bonds. Jesus, fearing an increase of ill-will on the part of Antipas, took the precaution to retire to the desert. Many people followed him there. Thanks to a strict frugality, the holy band succeeded in living there, and in this there was naturally seen a miracle. From that time Jesus always spoke of John with redoubled admiration. He declared unhesitatingly that he was more than a prophet, that the Law and the ancient prophets had force only until he came, that he had abrogated them, but that the kingdom of heaven in turn had superseded him. In fine, he assigned him a special place in the economy of the Christian mystery, which constituted him the link of union between the Old Testament and the advent of the new reign.

The prophet Malachi, whose opinion in this matter was soon brought to bear, had persistently declared that a precursor of the Messiah, who was to prepare men for the final renovation, a messenger who should come to make straight the paths before the elected of God. This messenger was none other than the prophet Elias, who, according to a widely-spread belief, was soon to descend from heaven, whither he had been carried, in order to

prepare men by repentance for the great advent, and to reconcile God with his people. Sometimes they associated with Elias, either the patriarch Enoch, to whom for one or two centuries they had been attributing high sanctity; or Jeremiah, whom they regarded as a sort of protecting genius of the people, constantly occupied in praying for them before the throne of God. This idea of two of the old prophets rising again, to act as precursors to the Messiah, is discovered in so striking a form in the doctrine of the Parsees, that we feel much inclined to believe that it comes from that source. Be that as it may, it formed at the time of Jesus an integral portion of the Jewish theories in regard to the Messiah. It was admitted that the appearance of "two faithful witnesses," clothed in garments of repentance, would be the preamble of the great drama about to be unfolded, to the astonishment of the universe.

We can understand that, with these ideas, Jesus and his disciples could not hesitate about the mission of John the Baptist. When the scribes raised the objection that it could not yet be a question of the Messiah, inasmuch as Elias had not yet appeared, they replied that Elias had come, that John was Elias raised from the dead. By his manner of life, by his opposition to the established political authorities, John recalled, in fact, that strange figure in the ancient history of Israel. Nor was Jesus silent in regard to the merits and excellencies of his forerunner. He said that among the children of men none greater had been born. He vehemently blamed the Pharisees and the doctors for not having accepted his baptism, and for not being converted at his voice.

The disciples of Jesus were faithful to these principles of their Master. Respect for John was an unquestioned tradition during the whole of the

first Christian generation. He was supposed to be a relative of Jesus. In order to establish the mission of the latter upon testimony admitted by all, it was stated that John, at the first sight of Jesus, proclaimed him the Messiah; that he recognised himself his inferior, unworthy to unloose the latchets of his shoes; that he refused at first to baptize him, and maintained that it was he who ought to be baptized by Jesus. These were exaggerations which are sufficiently refuted by the doubtful form of John's last message. But, in a more general sense, John remains in the Christian legend that which he was in reality,—the austere forerunner, the gloomy preacher of repentance before the joy on the arrival of the bridegroom, the prophet who announces the kingdom of God and dies before beholding it. This giant in primitive Christianity, this eater of locusts and wild honey, this rugged redresser of wrongs, was the tonic which prepared the lip for the sweetness of the kingdom of God. His beheading by Herodias inaugurated the era of Christian martyrs; he was the first witness for the new faith. The worldly, who regarded him their real enemy, could not permit him to live; his mutilated corpse, extended on the threshold of Christianity, indicated the bloody path in which so many others were to follow.

The school of John did not die with its founder. It existed some time distinct from that of Jesus, and from the first was on good terms with the latter. Many years after the death of the two masters, people were still baptized with the baptism of John. Certain persons were members of the two schools at the same time—for example, the celebrated Apollos, the rival of St. Paul (about the year 50), and a goodly number of the Christians of Ephesus. Josephus entered (in the year 53) the school of an ascetic named Banou, who presents a striking

resemblance to John the Baptist, and who was perhaps of his school. This Banou lived in the desert, and was clothed with the leaves of trees. His only nourishment was wild plants and fruits, and he baptized himself frequently, both day and night, in cold water, in order to purify himself. James, who was called the "brother of the Lord" (there is here perhaps some confusion of homonyms), practised a similar asceticism. Later, about the year 80, Baptism was in conflict with Christianity, especially in Asia Minor. The true school of John, half Christian in its character, became a small Christian sect, and died out in obscurity. John had distinctly foreseen the destiny of the two schools. If he had yielded to a pitiful rivalry, he would to-day be forgotten in the crowd of sectaries of his time. By his self-abnegation, he has attained a glorious and unique position in the religious pantheon of humanity.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### FIRST ATTEMPTS ON JERUSALEM.

Jesus went almost every year to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. The particulars of these journeys are meagre, for the synoptics do not speak of them, and the remarks in the fourth Gospel are on this point very confused. It was, it would seem, in the year 31, and certainly after the death of John, that the most important of the visits of Jesus to Jerusalem took place. Several of the disciples followed him. Although Jesus attached at that time little value to the pilgrimage, he conformed himself to it in order not to offend Jewish

opinion, with which he had not yet broken. These journeys, besides, were essential to his design; for he felt already that in order to play a leading part, he must go from Galilee, and attack Judaism in its stronghold, which was Jerusalem.

The little Galilean community was here far from being at home. Jerusalem was then nearly what it is to-day, a city of pedantry, acrimony, disputes, hatreds, and littleness of mind. Its fanaticism was extreme, and religious seditions were very frequent. The Pharisees were dominant; the study of the Law, pushed to the most insignificant minutiae, and reduced to questions of casuistry, was the only study. This exclusively theological and canonical culture contributed in nowise to refine the intellect. It was something analogous to the barren doctrine of the Mussulman fakir, to that empty science debated round the mosques, which is a great expenditure of time and a pure waste of dialectical skill without aiding the right discipline of the mind. The theological education of the modern clergy, although very dry, can give us no idea of this, for the Renaissance has introduced into all our teachings, even the most extravagant, something of *belles lettres* and of method, the consequence of which is that scholasticism has taken a taint more or less of the *humanities*. The science of the Jewish doctor was purely barbarous, absurd beyond measure, and stripped of all moral element. To cap the evil, it filled with ridiculous pride those who had wearied themselves in acquiring it. Proud of the pretended knowledge which had cost him so much trouble, the Jewish scribe had the same contempt for Greek culture as the learned Mussulman of our time has for European civilisation, as the old Catholic theologian had for the knowledge of men of the world. The tendency of this scholastic culture was to turn the mind against all

that was refined, to create esteem only for those childish difficulties on which they had wasted their lives, and which were regarded as the natural occupation of persons making a profession of seriousness.

This odious society could not but weigh very heavily on the tender and susceptible northern mind. The contempt of the Hierosolymites for the Galileans rendered the separation still more complete. In that beautiful temple, the object of all their desires, they often experienced insult. A verse of the pilgrim's psalm, "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God," seemed expressly made for them. A contemptuous priesthood laughed at their simple devotion, just as formerly in Italy the clergy, familiarised with the sanctuaries, witnessed coldly and almost jestingly the fervour of the pilgrims come from afar. The Galileans spoke a rather corrupt dialect, their pronunciation was faulty; they confounded diverse aspirates, which led to mistakes that were much laughed at. In religion, they were regarded as ignorant and little orthodox; the expression, "foolish Galileans," had become proverbial. It was believed (not without reason) that they were not of pure Jewish blood, and it was held, as a matter of course, that Galilee could not produce a prophet. Placed thus on the confines of Judaism, nay almost outside of it, the poor Galileans had only one badly-interpreted passage in Isaiah on which to build their hopes. "Land of Zebulon, and land of Naphtali, way of the sea, Galilee of the nations! The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shine!" The reputation of the native city of Jesus was particularly bad. It was a popular proverb, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

The great barrenness of nature in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem must have added to the dislike Jesus had for the place. The valleys are without water; the soil is arid and stony. Casting the eye into the valley of the Dead Sea, the view is somewhat striking; elsewhere it is monotonous. The hill of Mizpeh, around which clusters the most ancient historical remembrances of Israel, alone relieves the eye. The city presented, at the time of Jesus, nearly the same aspect that it does now. It had very few ancient monuments, for, until the time of the Asmoneans, the Jews had remained strangers to all the arts. John Hyrcanus had begun to embellish it, and Herod the Great had made it one of the most magnificent cities of the East. The Herodian constructions, by their grand character, perfection of execution, and beauty of material, may dispute superiority with the most finished works of antiquity. A great number of superb tombs, displaying original taste, were erected at the same time in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. The style of these monuments was Grecian, but appropriate to the customs of the Jews, and considerably modified in accordance with their principles. The ornamental sculptures of the human figure which the Herods had sanctioned, to the great disgust of the purists, were discarded and superseded by floral decorations. The taste of the ancient inhabitants of Phœnicia and Palestine for monoliths cut out of the solid stone, seemed to be revived in these singular tombs cut in the rock, and in which Grecian orders are so strangely applied to an architecture of troglodytes. Jesus, who regarded works of art as a pompous display of vanity, viewed these monuments with displeasure. His absolute spiritualism, and his settled conviction that the form of the old world was about to pass away, left him only a taste for things pertaining to the heart.



The temple, at the time of Jesus, was quite new, while its exterior works were not yet completed. Herod had begun its reconstruction in the year 20 or 21 before the Christian era, in order to make it uniform with his other edifices. The main body of the temple was finished in eighteen months; the porticoes took eight years; and the accessory portions were raised slowly, and were only finished a short time before the taking of Jerusalem. Jesus probably saw the work progressing, not without a degree of secret vexation. These hopes of a long future seemed like an insult to his approaching advent. Clearer-sighted than the unbelievers and the fanatics, he foresaw that these superb edifices would have but a short duration.

The temple, nevertheless, formed a marvellously imposing whole. The courts and the porticoes served as the daily rendezvous for a considerable gathering, so much so, that this great space was at once temple, forum, tribunal, and university. All the religious discussions of the Jewish schools, all the canonical instruction, even the legal processes and civil causes, all the activity of the nation, in short, was concentrated there. It was a place where arguments were perpetually clashing, a battle-field of disputes, resounding with sophisms and subtle questions. The temple thus resembled much a Mahometan mosque. At this period the Romans treated all strange religions with the greatest respect, provided they were kept within proper limits, and carefully refrained from entering the sanctuary; Greek and Latin inscriptions marked the point up to which those who were not Jews were permitted to advance. But the tower of Antonia, the headquarters of the Roman forces, commanded the whole enclosure, and enabled them to see all that passed therein. The guarding of the temple belonged to the Jews. Its superintend-

ence was entrusted to a captain, who caused the gates to be opened and shut, prohibited any one from crossing the enclosure with a stick in his hand, or with dusty shoes, or when carrying parcels, or to take a near cut. They were especially scrupulous in watching that no one entered within the inner gates in a state of legal impurity. The women had an entirely separate court.

It was in the temple that Jesus passed his days, whilst he remained at Jerusalem. The period of the feast attracted to the city extraordinary affluence. Lodged in parties of ten to twenty persons in one chamber, the pilgrims invaded everywhere, and lived in that huddled state in which Orientals delight. Jesus was lost in the crowd, and his poor Galileans who grouped around him were of small account. He probably felt that there he was in a hostile world which would receive him only with disdain. Everything he saw he disapproved. The temple, like all much-frequented places of devotion, presented a not very edifying spectacle. The services there entailed a multitude of repulsive enough details, especially of mercantile operations, in consequence of which actual shops were established within the sacred enclosure. There, people sold beasts for the sacrifices; there one found tables for the exchange of money; at times it seemed as if one were in a bazaar. The inferior officers of the temple fulfilled, doubtless, their functions with the irreligious vulgarity characteristic of the sacristans of all ages. This profane and indifferent air in the handling of holy things wounded the religious sentiment of Jesus, sometimes leading him to excess. He said that they had made the house of prayer a den of thieves. One day, in fact, it is said, that, carried away by his anger, he scourged the vendors with a "scourge of small cords," and overturned their tables. In general, he cared little

for the temple. The worship that he had conceived for his Father had nothing to do with scenes of butchery. All these old Jewish institutions displeased him, and it pained him to be obliged to conform to them. Thus, neither the temple nor its site inspired pious sentiments in the bosom of Christianity, except in the case of the Judaizing Christians. The true proselytes had an aversion to this ancient sanctuary. Constantine and the first Christian emperors left the pagan constructions of Adrian standing there. It was the enemies of Christianity, such as Julian, who thought of the temple. When Omar entered Jerusalem, the site of the Temple was designedly polluted in hatred of the Jews. It was Islamism, that is to say, a sort of resurrection of Judaism, which rendered it honours.

• The place has always been anti-Christian.

The pride of the Jews completed the discontent of Jesus and rendered his sojourn in Jerusalem painful. In proportion as the great ideas of Israel ripened, the priesthood became debased. The institution of synagogues had given to the interpreter of the Law, to the doctor, a great superiority over the priest. There were no priests except at Jerusalem, and even there, reduced to entirely ritual functions, almost, like our parish priests, excluded from preaching, they were surpassed by the orator of the synagogue, the casuist, the scribe, though the latter was but a layman. The celebrated 'men of the Talmud were not priests; they were learned men according to the ideas of the time. The high priesthood of Jerusalem held, it is true, a very elevated rank in the nation; but it was by no means at the head of the religious movement. The sovereign pontiff, whose dignity had already been degraded by Herod, became more and more a Roman functionary, who was frequently removed in order that others might share the profits of the office.

Opposed to the Pharisees, who were important lay zealots, the priests were almost all Sadducees, that is to say, members of that unbelieving aristocracy which had been formed around the temple, lived by the altar, though they saw the vanity of it. The sacerdotal caste was separated to such a degree from the national sentiment and from the great religious movement which urged the people on, that the name of "Sadducee" (*sadoki*), which at first simply designated a member of the sacerdotal family of Sadok, had become synonymous with "Materialist" and with "Epicurean."

An element worse still had begun, since the reign of Herod the Great, to corrupt the high-priesthood. Herod having fallen in love with Mariamne, daughter of a certain Simon, son of Boëthus of Alexandria, and having wished to marry her (about the year 28 B.C.), saw no other means of ennobling his father-in-law and raising him to his own rank, than by making him high-priest. This intriguing family remained master, almost without interruption, of the sovereign Pontificate for thirty-five years. Closely allied to the reigning family, it did not lose the office until after the deposition of Archelaus, and recovered it (the year 42 of our era) after Herod Agrippa had for some time recommenced the work of Herod the Great. Under the name of *Boëthusim*, a new sacerdotal nobility was formed, which was very worldly, little devotional, and closely allied to the Sadokites. From all this there resulted a kind of "court of Rome" around the temple, living by politics, little carried away by excess of zeal, even rather fearing them, not wishing to hear of holy personages or of innovators, for this "court" derived profit from the established routine. These epicurean priests had not the violence of the Pharisees; they only wished for quietness; it was their moral indifference,

their cold irreligion, which revolted Jesus. Although quite distinct, the priests and the Pharisees were thus confounded in his antipathies. But being a stranger, and without influence, he was long compelled to restrain his displeasure within himself, and only to communicate his sentiments to the intimate friends who accompanied him.

Before his last stay, much more protracted than any he had made at Jerusalem, and which was terminated by his death, Jesus endeavoured, however, to make himself heard. He preached; people spoke of him; and they conversed upon certain acts of his which were looked upon as miraculous. But from all that, there resulted neither an established church at Jerusalem nor a group of Hierosolymite disciples. The charming lawgiver, who forgave every one provided they but loved him, could not find much response in this sanctuary of vain disputes and of obsolete sacrifices. The sole result was that he formed some valuable friendships, the advantage of which he reaped afterwards. He does not appear at that time to have made the acquaintance of the family of Bethany, which, amidst the trials of the latter months of his life, brought him so much consolation. But very early he attracted the attention of a certain Nicodemus, a rich Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrim, and a man highly considered in Jerusalem. This man, who appears to have been upright and sincere, felt himself drawn towards the young Galilean. Not wishing to compromise himself, he came to see Jesus by night, and had a long conversation with him. He undoubtedly preserved a favourable impression of him, for later on he defended Jesus against the prejudices of his colleagues, and, at the death of Jesus, we find him tending with pious care the corpse of the Master. Nicodemus did not become a Christian; he had too much regard for his

position to take part in a revolutionary movement which as yet numbered no men of note amongst its adherents. But he evidently had much friendship for Jesus, and rendered him service, though powerless to rescue him from a death which even at this period was all but decreed.

As to the celebrated doctors of the time, Jesus does not appear to have had any connection with them. Hillel and Shammai were dead; the greatest authority of the day was Gamaliel, grandson of Hillel. He was of a liberal mind, and a man of the world, open to secular opinions, and rendered tolerant by his intercourse with good society. Differing from the very strict Pharisees, who walked veiled or with closed eyes, he gazed even upon Pagan women. The sectaries excused this in him, as well as a knowledge of Greek, because he had access to the court. After the death of Jesus, he expressed very moderate views in regard to the new sect. St. Paul sat at his feet, but it is highly improbable that Jesus ever entered his school.

One idea, at least, which Jesus carried away from Jerusalem, and which henceforth appeared to be rooted in his mind, was that there was no union possible between him and the ancient Jewish religion. The abolition of the sacrifices, which had caused him so much disgust, the suppression of an impious and haughty priesthood, and, in a general sense, the abrogation of the law, appeared to him an absolute necessity. From this moment he is no longer a Jewish reformer, but it is as a destroyer of Judaism that he poses. Some advocates of the Messianic notions had already admitted that the Messiah would bring a new law, which should be common to all people. The Essenes, who were scarcely Jews, appear also to have been indifferent to the temple and to the Mosaic observances. But these were only isolated or unavowed instances of

boldness. Jesus was the first who dared to say that from his time, or rather from that of John, the Law was abolished. If sometimes he used more guarded terms, it was in order not to shock too violently existing prejudices. When he was driven to extremities, he lifted the veil entirely, and declared that the Law had no longer any force. On this subject he used striking comparisons. "No man putteth a piece of new cloth into an old garment, neither do men put new wine into old bottles." Herein lies his chief characteristic as teacher and creator. The temple excluded all except Jews from its enclosure by scornful placards. Jesus did not approve this. That narrow, hard, and uncharitable Law was only made for the children of Abraham. Jesus maintained that every well-disposed man, every man who received and loved him, was a son of Abraham. The pride of blood appeared to him the chief enemy that he had to combat. In other words, Jesus was no longer a Jew. He was in the highest degree revolutionary; he called all men to a worship founded solely on the fact of their being children of God. He proclaimed the rights of man, not the rights of the Jew; the religion of man, not the religion of the Jew; the deliverance of man, not the deliverance of the Jew. Ah! how far removed was this from a Gaulonite Judas or a Matthias Margaloth, preaching revolution in the name of the Law! The religion of humanity was established, not upon blood, but upon the heart. Moses was superseded, the temple was rendered useless, and was irrevocably condemned.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## RELATIONS OF JESUS WITH THE PAGANS AND THE SAMARITANS.

As a consequence of these principles, Jesus condemned all religion which was not of the heart. The foolish practices of the devotees, the exterior rigorism, which trusted to formality for salvation, had in him a mortal enemy. He cared little for fasting. He preferred forgiving an injury to sacrifice. The love of God, charity, and reciprocal forgiveness, were his whole law. Nothing could be less priestly. The priest, by virtue of his office, ever advocates public sacrifice, of which he is the appointed minister; he discourages private prayer, which is a means of dispensing with his office. We should seek in vain in the Gospel for one religious rite recommended by Jesus. Baptism to him was only of secondary importance; as to prayer, he prescribes nothing, except that it should come from the heart. As is always the case, many thought to substitute the good-will of feeble souls for genuine love of goodness, and imagined they could gain the kingdom of heaven by saying to him, "Rabbi, Rabbi;" but he rebuked them, and proclaimed that his religion consisted in doing good. He often quoted the passage in Isaiah: "This people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."

The Sabbath was the principal point upon which was raised the whole edifice of Pharisaic scruples and subtleties. This ancient and excellent institution had become a pretext for the miserable disputes of casuists, and a source of superstitious beliefs. It was believed that nature observed it; all intermittent springs were accounted "Sab-



batical." This was, moreover, the point upon which Jesus most delighted in defying his adversaries. He openly violated the Sabbath, and only replied by subtle raillery to the reproaches that were heaped upon him. For a still stronger reason he despised a host of modern observances, which tradition had added to the Law, and which on that very account were dearer than any other to the devotees. Ablutions, and the too subtle distinctions between things pure and impure found in him a pitiless opponent: "There is nothing from without a man," said he, "that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man." The Pharisees, who were the propagators of these mummeries, were the target for all his attacks. He accused them of exceeding the Law, of inventing impracticable precepts, in order to create occasions of sin in man: "Blind leaders of the blind," said he, "take care lest ye also fall into the ditch." "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

He was not sufficiently acquainted with the Gentiles to think of founding anything lasting upon their conversion. Galilee contained a great number of Pagans, but, as it appears, no public and organised worship of false gods. Jesus could see this worship displayed in all its splendour in the country of Tyre and Sidon, at Caesarea-Philippi and in the Decapolis, but he paid little attention to it. In him we never find the wearisome Jewish pedantry of his time, nor those declamations against idolatry, so familiar to his co-religionists from the time of Alexander, and which fill, for instance, the Book of "Wisdom." That which struck him in the Pagans was not their idolatry, but their servility. The young Jewish democrat agreeing on this point with

Judas the Gaulonite, admitting no master but God, was hurt at the honours with which they surrounded the persons of sovereigns, and the mendacious titles frequently given to them. With this exception, in the greater number of instances in which he comes in contact with pagans, he shows towards them great indulgence; sometimes he professes to conceive more hope of them than of the Jews. The kingdom of God is to be made over to them. "When the lord, therefore, of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto these husbandmen? He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons." Jesus adhered so much the more to this idea, as the conversion of the Gentiles was, according to Jewish notions, one of the surest signs of the advent of the Messiah. In his kingdom of God he represents, as seated at a feast, by the side of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, men come from the four winds of heaven, whilst the lawful heirs of the kingdom are shut out. Sometimes, it is true, there is to be found in the commands he gives to his disciples an entirely contrary tendency: he seems to recommend them to preach salvation to the orthodox Jews only; he speaks of pagans in a manner conformable to the prejudices of the Jews. But we must remember that the disciples, whose narrow minds did not lend themselves to this supreme indifference for the privileges of the sons of Abraham, may have given the instruction of their master the bent of their own ideas. Besides, it is very possible that Jesus may have vacillated on this point, just as Mahomet speaks of the Jews in the Koran, sometimes in the most honourable manner, sometimes with extreme harshness, according as he had hoped or not to win their favour. Tradition, in fact, ascribes to Jesus two entirely opposite rules of proselytism, which he

may have practised in turn: "He that is not against us, is on our part." "He that is not with me, is against me." Impassioned contention involves almost necessarily these sorts of contradictions.

It is certain that he numbered amongst his disciples many men whom the Jews designated "Hellenes." This term had in Palestine divers meanings. Sometimes it designated the pagans; sometimes the Greek-speaking Jews dwelling among the pagans; sometimes men of pagan origin converted to Judaism. It was probably in this last category of Hellenes that Jesus found sympathy. The affiliation with Judaism had numerous degrees; but the proselytes always remained in a state of inferiority as compared with the Jew by birth. The former were called "proselytes of the gate," or "men fearing God," and were subject to the precepts of Noah, and not to those of Moses. This very inferiority was unquestionably the cause which drew them to Jesus, and gained them his favour.

It was in the same manner that he treated the Samaritans. Surrounded, like a small island, by the two great provinces of Judaism (Judea and Galilee), Samaria formed in Palestine a kind of enclosure in which was preserved the ancient worship of Gerizim, closely related to and rivalling that of Jerusalem. This poor sect, which had neither the genius nor the perfect organisation of Judaism, properly so called, was treated by the Hierosolymites with extreme harshness. They placed them on the same footing with pagans, but hated them more. Jesus, from a spirit of opposition, was well disposed towards her. He often preferred the Samaritans to the orthodox Jews. If, on the other hand, he seems to forbid his disciples from going to preach to them, reserving his gospel for the Israelites proper, this was no doubt a précept dictated by special circumstances,

to which the apostles have attached too absolute a meaning. Sometimes, in fact, the Samaritans received him badly, because they supposed him imbued with the prejudices of his co-religionists; in like manner, as in our days, the European freethinker is regarded as an enemy by the Mussulman, who always believes him to be a fanatical Christian. Jesus knew how to rise above these misunderstandings. He had many disciples at Shechem, and he passed at least two days there. On one occasion he meets with gratitude and true piety from a Samaritan only. One of his most beautiful parables is that of the man injured on the way to Jericho. A priest passes by and sees him, but goes on his way; a Levite also passes, but does not stop; a Samaritan has compassion on him, approaches, and pours oil into his wounds, and binds them up. Jesus argues hence that true brotherhood is established amongst men by charity, and not by religious tenets. The "neighbour" who in Judaism was limited to the co-religionist, was in his estimation the man who has pity on his fellow without distinction of sect. Human brotherhood in its widest sense abounds in all his teachings.

These ideas, which beset Jesus on his leaving Jerusalem, found vivid expression in an anecdote which has been preserved in regard to his return. The route from Jerusalem into Galilee, passes from Shechem, at a distance of about half an hour's walk, at the opening of the valley commanded by mounts Ebal and Gerizim. This route was in general shunned by the Jewish pilgrims, who preferred journeying by the long *détour* through Perea, rather than expose themselves to the ill-treatment of the Samaritans, or have to ask anything of them. It was forbidden to eat and drink with them, for it was an axiom of certain casuists, that "a piece of Samaritan bread is the flesh of swine." When they followed this route,

provisions were always laid up beforehand; yet it was rare they could avoid scuffles and ill-treatment. Jesus shared neither these scruples nor these fears. Arrived, by this route, at the point whence the valley of Shechem opens on the left, he felt fatigued, and stopped near a well. The Samaritans were then as now in the habit of giving to the different spots of their valley names drawn from patriarchal reminiscences. They regarded this well as having been given by Jacob to Joseph; it was probably the same that is called to-day *Bir-Iakoub*. The disciples entered the valley and went to the city to buy provisions; Jesus sat by the side of the well, having Gerizim in front of him.

It was about noon, and a woman of Shechem came to draw water. Jesus asked of her to drink, which excited great astonishment in the woman, the Jews generally forbidding all intercourse with the Samaritans. Won by the conversation of Jesus, the woman recognised in him a prophet, and anticipating reproaches about her worship, she took up speech first:—"Sir," said she, "our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

The day on which he uttered this saying, he was in reality Son of God. He proclaimed for the first time the words upon which will repose the edifice of eternal religion. He founded the pure worship of all ages, of all lands, that which all elevated souls will embrace until the end of time. Not only was his religion on this day the best religion of humanity, but it was the absolute religion; and if other planets have inhabitants endowed with reason

and morality, their religion cannot be different from that which Jesus proclaimed near Jacob's well. Man has not been able to hold to it; for he can attain the ideal but for a moment. This sentence of Jesus has been a bright light amidst gross darkness; it has taken eighteen hundred years for the eyes of mankind (I ought rather to say for an infinitely small portion of mankind) to become accustomed to it. But the light will grow into the full day, and, after having traversed all the cycles of error, mankind will come back to this sentence, and regard it as the immortal expression of its faith and its hope.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### COMMENCEMENT OF THE LEGEND OF JESUS—HIS OWN IDEA OF HIS SUPERNATURAL CHARACTER.

JESUS, having completely lost his Jewish faith, and filled with revolutionary ardour, returned to Galilee. His ideas are now expressed with perfect clearness. The simple aphorisms of the first part of his prophetic career, borrowed in part from the Jewish rabbis anterior to him, and the beautiful moral teachings of his second period, are discarded for a decided policy. The Law must be abolished; and it is to be abolished by him. The Messiah has come, and he it is who is the Messiah. The kingdom of God is soon to be revealed; and it is he who will reveal it. He knows well that he will suffer for his boldness; but the kingdom of God cannot be conquered without violence; it is by crises and commotions that it will be established. The Son of Man after his death will return in glory, accom-

panied by legions of angels, and those who have rejected him will be confounded.

The boldness of such a conception ought not to surprise us. Long before this, Jesus regarded his relation to God as that of a son to his father. That which in others would be insupportable pride, ought not in him to be treated as presumption.

The title of "Son of David" was the first that he accepted, probably without his being implicated in the innocent frauds by which it was sought to secure it to him. The family of David had, as it appears, been long extinct; nor did the Asmoneans, who were of priestly origin, nor Herod, nor the Romans dream for a moment that any representative whatever of the ancient dynasty existed in their midst. But from the close of the Asmonean dynasty the dream of an unknown descendant of the ancient kings who should avenge the nation of its enemies, worked in every brain. The universal belief was, that the Messiah would be son of David, and like him would be born at Bethlehem. The first thought of Jesus was not this exactly. The remembrance of David, which was uppermost in the minds of the majority of the Jews, had nothing in common with his heavenly reign. He believed himself the Son of God, and not the son of David. His kingdom, and the deliverance which he meditated, were of quite another order. But opinion on this point caused him to do himself a sort of violence. The immediate consequence of the proposition, "Jesus is the Messiah," was this other proposition, "Jesus is the son of David." He allowed a title to be given him, without which he could not hope for success. And in the end he appears to have taken pleasure in it, inasmuch as he performed most willingly the miracles which were asked of him by those who used this title in addressing him. In this, as in many other circumstances of his life, Jesus yielded

to the notions which were current in his time, although they were not precisely his own. He associated with his doctrine of the "kingdom of God" all that could stimulate the heart and the imagination. Hence it is that we have seen him adopt the baptism of John, although it could not be of much importance to him.

One great difficulty presented itself, to wit: his birth at Nazareth, which was of public notoriety. We do not know whether Jesus endeavoured to remove this objection. Perhaps it did not present itself in Galilee, where the idea that the son of David should be a Bethlehemite was less spread. To the Galilean idealist, moreover, the title of "son of David" was sufficiently justified, if he to whom it was given should retrieve the glory of his race, and bring back the great days of Israel. Did Jesus, by his silence, assent to the fictitious genealogies which his partisans invented in order to prove his royal descent? Did he know anything of the legends invented to prove that he was born at Bethlehem? and particularly of the attempt to connect his Bethlehemite origin with the census which had taken place by order of Quirinus, the imperial legate? We cannot tell. The inexactitude and the contradictions of the genealogies lead to the belief that they were the result of popular notions operating at various points, and that none of them was sanctioned by Jesus. Never with his own lips does he designate himself, son of David. His disciples, much less enlightened than he, sometimes magnified what he said of himself; but very often he knew nothing of these exaggerations. And we must add that, during the first three centuries, considerable portions of Christendom obstinately denied the royal descent of Jesus and the authenticity of the genealogies.

The legend about him was thus the result of a



great and entirely spontaneous conspiracy, and began to surround him during his lifetime. There has been no great event in history which has not given rise to a series of fables; and Jesus could not, even had he wished, put a stop to these popular creations. Doubtless a sagacious observer would have detected in them the germ of the narratives which were to ascribe to him a supernatural birth, either by reason of the idea, very prevalent in ancient times, that the incomparable man could not be born of the ordinary relations of the two sexes, or for the purpose of fulfilling the requirements of an imperfectly understood chapter of Isaiah, which was believed to foretell that the Messiah should be born of a virgin; or, lastly, as the result of a belief that the "breath of God," already regarded as a divine hypostasis, was a principle of fecundity. There was by this time, no doubt, more than one current anecdote regarding his infancy, invented for the purpose of showing in his biography the accomplishment of passages reputed prophetic that were connected with the Messiah. At other times he was connected from his birth with celebrated men, such as John the Baptist, Herod the Great, Chaldæan astrologers, who, it was said, visited Jerusalem about this time, and two aged persons, Simeon and Anna, who had left memories of great sanctity. A rather loose chronology characterised these combinations, which for the most part were founded on a travesty of real facts. But a singular spirit of gentleness and goodness, an intensely popular sentiment permeated all these fables, and made them a supplement to his preaching. It was after the death of Jesus especially that such narratives received their development; we can, however, believe that they were circulated even during his life, exciting no more than pious credulity and simple admiration.

That Jesus never dreamt of passing himself for an incarnation of the true God, there can be no doubt. Such an idea was quite foreign to the Jewish mind : and there is no trace of it in the three first gospels ; we only find it alluded to in portions of the Gospel of John, which cannot be accepted as reflecting the thoughts of Jesus. Sometimes Jesus even seems to take precautions to repress such a doctrine. The accusation that he made himself God, or the equal of God, is presented, in the Gospel of John itself, as a calumny of the Jews. In the latter Gospel he declares himself less than his Father. Elsewhere he avows that the Father has not revealed everything to him. He believes himself to be more than an ordinary man, but separated from God by an infinite distance. He is Son of God, but all men are or may become so, in divers degrees. Every one ought to call God each day his father ; all who are raised again will be sons of God. The divine sonship was attributed in the Old Testament to beings who, it was by no means pretended, were equal with God. The word "son" has, in the language of the New Testament, the widest meaning. Besides, the idea Jesus had of man was not that low idea which a cold Deism has introduced. In his poetic conception of nature, one breath alone pervades the universe : the breath of man is that of God ; God dwells in man, and lives by man, the same as man dwells in God, and lives by God. The transcendent idealism of Jesus never permitted him to have a very clear notion of his own personality. He is his Father, his Father is he. He lives in his disciples ; he is everywhere with them ; his disciples are one, as he and his Father are one. The idea to him is everything ; the body, which makes the distinction of individuals, is nothing.

The title "Son of God," or simply "Son," became thus for Jesus a title analogous to "Son of Man,"

with the sole difference that he called himself "Son of Man," and does not seem to have made the same use of the phrase, "Son of God." The title, "Son of Man," expressed his character as judge; that of "Son of God" his participation in the supreme designs, and his power. This power has no limits. His Father had given him all power. He had the right to alter even the Sabbath. No one could know the Father but through him. The Father had delegated to him the right to judge. Nature obeyed him; but she obeys also all who believe and pray, for faith can do everything. We must bear in mind that no idea of the laws of nature marked, either in his own mind, or in that of his hearer, the limit of the impossible. The witnesses of his miracles thanked God "for having given such power unto men." He pardoned sins; he is superior to David, to Abraham, to Solomon, to the prophets. We do not know in what form, nor to what extent, these affirmations of himself were made. Jesus ought not to be judged by the rule governing our petty conventionalities. The admiration of his disciples overwhelmed and carried him away. It is evident that the title of *Rabbi*, with which he was at first contented, no longer sufficed him; even the title of prophet or messenger of God responded no longer to his ideas. The position which he assigned himself was that of a superhuman being, and he wished to be regarded as having a higher relationship to God than other men. But it must be remarked that these words, "superhuman" and "supernatural," borrowed from our pitiful theology, had no meaning in the exalted religious consciousness of Jesus. To him nature and the development of humanity were not limited kingdoms apart from God—paltry realities subject to the laws of a desperate rigorism. There was no supernatural for him, for the reason that there was no nature.

Intoxicated with infinite love, he forgot the heavy chain which holds the spirit captive; he cleared at one bound the abyss, impossible to most, which the weakness of the human faculties has formed between God and man.

. In any case, rigorous dogmatism could hardly exist in such a state of society. All the ideas we have just stated formed in the mind of the disciples a theological system so little settled, that the Son of God, this species of divine duplicate, is made to act purely as man. He is tempted—he is ignorant of many things—he corrects himself—he is cast down, discouraged—he asks his Father to spare him trials—he is submissive to God as a son. He who must judge the world does not know the day of judgment. He takes precautions for his safety. Immediately after his birth, he is obliged to be concealed to escape from powerful men who wish to kill him. All these are simply the acts of a messenger of God, of a man protected and favoured by God. We must not ask here for logic or sequence. The need Jesus had of obtaining credence, and the enthusiasm of his disciples, piled up contradictory notions. To those who believed in the coming of the Messiah, and to the enthusiastic readers of the books of Daniel and of Enoch, he was the Son of Man; to the Jews holding the common faith, and to the readers of Isaiah and Micah he was the Son of David; to the disciples he was the Son of God, or simply the Son. Others, without being blamed by the disciples, took him for John the Baptist risen from the dead, for Elias, for Jeremiah, conformable to the popular belief that the ancient prophets were about to reappear, in order to prepare the way of the Messiah.

Miracles at that time were regarded as the indispensable mark of the divine, and as the sign of the prophetic vocation. The legends of Elijah and

Elisha were full of them. It was understood that the Messiah would perform many. It must be borne in mind that all antiquity, with the exception of the great scientific schools of Greece and their Roman disciples, believed in miracles; and that Jesus not only believed in them, but also had not the least idea of an order of nature regulated by fixed laws. His knowledge on this point was not at all superior to that of his contemporaries. Nay, more, one of his most deeply-rooted opinions was, that by faith and prayer man has entire power over nature. The faculty of performing miracles was held to be a privilege regularly conferred by God upon men, and there was nothing surprising in it.

It is impossible, amongst the miraculous narratives so tediously enumerated in the Gospels, to distinguish the miracles attributed to Jesus by public opinion from those in which he consented to play an active part. It is especially impossible to ascertain whether the offensive circumstances attending them, the groanings, the strugglings, and other features savouring of jugglery, are really historical, or whether they are the outcome of the belief. Popular rumour, both before and after the death of Jesus, doubtless exaggerated enormously the number of feats of this kind. Almost all the miracles that Jesus believed he performed appear to have been miracles of healing. Medicine was at that period in Judea, what it still is in the East, that is to say, far from being scientific, and absolutely surrendered to individual inspiration. The scientific school of medicine, founded by Greece five centuries before, was at the time of Jesus unknown to the Jews of Palestine. In such a state of knowledge, the presence of a superior man, treating the sick with gentleness, and giving him by some tangible signs the assurance of his recovery, is often a decisive remedy. Who would dare to say that in many

cases, excepting of course certain peculiar injuries, the touch of a superior being is not equal to all the resources of pharmacy? The mere pleasure of seeing such a one cures. He gives what he can—a smile, a hope, and these are not in vain.

• Jesus had no more idea than his countrymen of a rational medical science; he shared the general belief, that healing was to be effected by religious practices, and such a belief was perfectly consistent. From the moment that disease was regarded as the punishment of sin, or as the act of a demon, and in no way as the result of physical causes, the best physician was the holy man who had power in the supernatural world. Healing was regarded as a moral act; Jesus, who was conscious of moral power, would believe himself specially gifted to heal. Convinced that the touching of his robe, the imposition of his hands benefited the sick, he would have been hard-hearted if he had refused to those who suffered, a solace which it was in his power to bestow. The healing of the sick was considered as one of the signs of the kingdom of God, and was always associated with the emancipation of the poor. Both were the signs of the great revolution that was to culminate in the redressing of all infirmities.

One of the species of cure which Jesus most frequently performed was exorcism, or the casting out of devils. It was a universal opinion, not only in Judea, but everywhere, that demons took possession of the bodies of certain persons and made them act contrary to their wills. In epilepsy, in mental and nervous disorders, when the patient seems not to belong to himself, and in infirmities, the cause of which is not apparent, such as deafness and numbness, were explained in the same manner. There were then many lunatics in Judea, doubtless the result of the great mental excitement. These

fools, who were permitted to roam about, as they still are in the same districts, inhabited the abandoned sepulchral caves, which were the ordinary retreat of vagrants. Jesus had much control over these unfortunates. A thousand singular stories are related in connection with his cures, in which the credulity of the time had full scope. Nevertheless these difficulties must not be exaggerated. The disorders which were regarded as "possessions" were often very slight. In our times, in Syria, people are regarded as mad or possessed by a demon who are only somewhat eccentric. A gentle word often suffices in such cases to drive away the demon. Such were doubtless the means employed by Jesus.

Perfect innocence, and that enthusiasm, which did not admit even the possibility of a doubt, would explain these bold actions. 'Some persons less pure than himself sought to abuse his name by connecting it with seditious movements. But the purely moral and in no respect political tendency of the character of Jesus saved him from these entanglements. His kingdom was in the circle of disciples, whom a like freshness of imagination and the same foretaste of heaven had grouped and retained around him.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### DEFINITE FORM OF THE IDEAS OF JESUS RESPECTING THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

WE suppose that this last phase of the activity of Jesus continued about eighteen months, reckoning from his return from the Passover of the year 31, to his journey to the Feast of Tabernacles of the year 32. During that interval, the mind of Jesus does not

appear to have been enriched by any new element; but all that was in him developed and grew with ever-increasing power and boldness.

The fundamental idea of Jesus from the first, was the establishment of the kingdom of God. But this kingdom of God, as we have already said, appears to have been understood by Jesus in very different senses. At times, he might be taken for a democratic leader desiring only the triumph of the poor and the disinherited. At other times, the kingdom of God is the literal accomplishment of the visions of Daniel and Enoch. Finally, the kingdom of God is often a spiritual kingdom, and the near deliverance is a deliverance of the spirit. The revolution then desired by Jesus was that which has actually taken place; the establishment of a new worship, purer than that of Moses. All these thoughts appear to have been co-existent in the mind of Jesus. The first one, however—that of a temporal revolution—does not appear to have had much hold on him; Jesus never regarded the earth or the riches of the earth, or material power a thing worth caring for. He had no worldly ambition. Sometimes by a natural consequence, his great religious importance was in danger of being changed into mere social importance. Men came requesting him to judge and arbitrate on questions which affected their interests. Jesus rejected these proposals with scorn, treating them as insults. Full of his heavenly ideal, he never abandoned his disdainful poverty.

As to the other two conceptions of the kingdom of God, Jesus appears always to have held them simultaneously. If his only thought had been that the end of time was near, and that we must prepare for it, he would not have surpassed John the Baptist. To renounce a world ready to crumble, to detach one's self little by little from the present



life, and to aspire to the kingdom about to come, would have been the essence of his preaching. The teaching of Jesus had always a much larger scope. He proposed to himself to create a new state of humanity, and not merely to prepare the end of that which did exist. Elias or Jeremiah, re-appearing in order to prepare men for the supreme crisis, would not have preached as he did. This is so true, that this morality, attributed to the latter days, is found to be the eternal morality, that which has saved humanity. Jesus himself in many cases makes use of modes of speech which do not enter at all into a material kingdom. He often declares that the kingdom of God has already commenced; that every man bears it within himself; and can, if he be worthy, partake of it; that each one silently creates this kingdom by the true conversion of the heart. The kingdom of God at such times is only the highest form of good; a better order of things than that which exists, the reign of justice, which the faithful, according to their ability, ought to help in establishing; or, again, the liberty of the soul, something analogous to the Buddhist "deliverance," the fruit of the soul's separation from matter and absorption in the divine essence. These truths, which to us are pure abstractions, were living realities to Jesus. Everything in his mind was concrete and substantial. Jesus, of all men, believed most thoroughly in the reality of the ideal.

And let us not say that this is a benevolent interpretation, imagined in order to clear the honour of our great Master from the cruel contradiction inflicted on his dreams by reality. No, no. By an illusion common to all reformers, Jesus imagined the goal much nearer than it was. He took no account of the slowness of the movements of humanity; he thought to realize in a day that which, eighteen hundred years later, is not yet

achieved. But this true kingdom of God, this kingdom of the spirit, which makes each one king and priest; this kingdom which, like the grain of mustard-seed, has become a tree which overshadows the world, and amidst whose branches the birds have their nests, was understood, wished for, and founded by Jesus. By the side of the false, cold, and impossible idea of an ostentatious advent, he conceived the real city of God, the true "renaissance," the Sermon on the Mount, the apotheosis of the weak, the love of the people, regard for the poor, and the re-establishment of all that is humble, true, and simple. This re-habilitation he has depicted as an incomparable artist, by features which will last eternally. Each of us owes that which is best in himself to him. Let us pardon him his hope of a second coming in great triumph upon the clouds of heaven. Perhaps these were the errors of others rather than his own; and if it be true that he himself shared the general illusion, what matters it, since his dream rendered him strong against death, and sustained him in a struggle, to which he might otherwise have been unequal?

In accepting the Utopias of his time and his race, Jesus thus was able to make high truths of them, thanks to the fruitful misconceptions of their import. His kingdom of God was no doubt the approaching Apocalypse, which was about to be unfolded in the heavens. But it was still, and probably above all the kingdom of the soul, founded on liberty and on the filial sentiment which the virtuous man feels when resting on the bosom of his Father. It was a pure religion, without forms, without temple, and without priest; it was the moral judgment of the world, delegated to the conscience of the just man, and to the arm of the people. This is what was destined to live; this is what has

lived. When, at the end of a century of vain expectation, the materialistic hope of a near end of the world was exhausted, the true kingdom of God became apparent. Accommodating explanations threw a veil over the material kingdom, which was then seen to be incapable of realisation. The Apocalypse of John, the chief canonical book of the New Testament, being too formally tied to the idea of an immediate catastrophe, became of secondary importance, was held to be unintelligible, tortured in a thousand ways and almost rejected. At least, its accomplishment was adjourned to an indefinite future. Some poor benighted ones who, in a fully enlightened age, still preserved the hopes of the first disciples, became heretics (Ebionites, Millenarians) lost in the shallows of Christianity. Mankind had passed to another kingdom of God. The degree of truth contained in the thought of Jesus had prevailed over the chimera which obscured it.

Let us not, however, despise this chimera, which has been the thick rind of the sacred fruit on which we live. This fantastic kingdom of heaven, this endless pursuit after a city of God, which has constantly preoccupied Christianity during its long career, has been the principle of that great instinct of futurity which has animated all reformers, persistent believers in the Apocalypse, from Joachim of Flora down to the Protestant sectary of our days. This impotent effort to establish a perfect society has been the source of the extraordinary tension which has always made the true Christian an athlete struggling against the existing order of things. The idea of the "kingdom of God," and the Apocalypse, which is the complete image of it, are thus, in a sense, the highest and most poetic expressions of human progress. But they have necessarily given rise to great errors. The end of the

world, suspended as a perpetual menace over mankind, was, by the periodical panics which it caused during centuries, a great drawback to all secular development. Society being no longer certain of its existence, contracted therefrom a degree of trepidation, and those habits of servile humility, which rendered the Middle Ages so inferior to ancient and modern times. A profound change had also taken place in the mode of regarding the coming of Christ. When it was first announced to humanity that the end of the world was about to come, it experienced, like the infant which receives death with a smile, the greatest access of joy that it has ever felt. But in growing old, the world became attached to life. The day of grace, so long expected by the simple people of Galilee, became to these iron ages a day of wrath: *Dies iræ, dies illa!* But, even in the midst of barbarism, the idea of the kingdom of God continued to spread still. In spite of the feudal church, of sects, and of religious orders, holy persons protested, in the name of the Gospel, against the iniquity of the world. Even in our days, troubled days, in which Jesus has no more authentic followers than those who seem to deny him, the dreams of an ideal organisation of society, which have so much analogy to the aspirations of the primitive Christian sects, are only in one sense the blossoming of the same idea. They are one of the branches of that immense tree in which germinates all thought of a future, and of which the "kingdom of God" will be eternally the root and stem. All the social revolutions of humanity will be grafted on this phrase. But, tainted by a coarse materialism, and aspiring to the impossible, that is to say, to found universal happiness upon political and economical measures, the "socialist" attempts of our time will remain unfruitful, until they take as

their rule the true spirit of Jesus—I mean absolute idealism—the principle that, in order to possess the world, we must renounce it.

The phrase, “kingdom of God,” on the other hand, expresses also, very happily, the want which the soul experiences of a supplementary destiny, of a compensation for the present life. Who knows if the highest term of progress after millions of ages may not evoke the absolute conscience of the universe, and in this conscience the awakening of all that has lived? A sleep of a millior of years is no longer than the sleep of an hour. Jesus, on this hypothesis, was right in saying, *In ictu oculi!* It is certain that moral and virtuous humanity will have its reward, that one day the ideas of the poor but honest man will judge the world, and that on that day the ideal figure of Jesus will be the confusion of the frivolous who have not believed in virtue, and of the selfish who have not been able to attain to it. The favourite phrase of Jesus remains, therefore, full of an eternal beauty. A kind of exalted divination seems to have maintained it in a vague sublimity, embracing at the same time various orders of truths.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### INSTITUTIONS OF JESUS.

THAT Jesus was never entirely absorbed in his Apocalyptic ideas is proved, beyond doubt, by the fact that at the very time he was most preoccupied with them, he laid with rare forethought the foundation of a church destined to endure. It is scarcely possible to doubt that he himself chose from among

his disciples those who were pre-eminently called the "apostles," or the "twelve," since on the day after his death we find them forming themselves into a body, and filling up by election the vacancies that had arisen in their midst. These were the two sons of Jonas, the two sons of Zebedee; James, son of Cleophas; Philip; Nathaniel bar-Tolmai; Thomas; Levi, or Matthew, the son of Alphæus; Simon Zelotes; Thaddeus or Lebbæus; and Judas of Kerioth. It is probable that the idea of the twelve tribes of Israel had had some share in the choice of this number.

The "twelve," at all events, formed a group of privileged disciples, among whom Peter maintained a fraternal priority, and to them Jesus confided the propagation of his work. There was nothing, however, which presented the appearance of a regularly organised sacerdotal school. The lists of the "twelve," which have been preserved, embrace many uncertainties and contradictions; two or three of those who figure in them have remained completely obscure. Two, at least, Peter and Philip, were married and had children.

Jesus evidently confided secrets to the twelve, which he forbade them to communicate to the world. It seems as if his plan at times was to surround himself with a degree of mystery, to postpone the most important testimony respecting himself till after his death, and to reveal himself completely only to his disciples, confiding to them the care of proclaiming him afterwards to the world. "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops." It is clear that there were certain teachings confined to the apostles, and that he explained many parables to them, the meaning of which was ambiguous to the multitude. An enigmatical form and a degree of boldness in

connecting ideas, were customary in the teachings of the doctors, as may be seen in the sentences of the *Pirké Aboth*. Jesus explained to his intimate friends whatever was peculiar in his apothegms or in his apologues, and showed them his meaning stripped of the wealth of illustration which sometimes obscured it. Many of these explanations appear to have been carefully preserved.

During the lifetime of Jesus the apostles preached, but without ever departing far from him. Their preaching, moreover, was limited to the announcement of the speedy coming of the kingdom of God. They went from town to town, receiving hospitality, or rather taking it themselves, according to custom. The guest in the East has many privileges; he is superior to the master of the house, who has the greatest confidence in him. This fireside preaching is admirably adapted to the propagation of new doctrines. The hidden treasure is communicated, and payment is thus made for what is received; politeness and good feeling lend their aid; the household is touched and converted. Remove Oriental hospitality, and it would be impossible to explain the propagation of Christianity. Jesus, who adhered strongly to good old customs, encouraged his disciples to make no scruple of profiting by this ancient public right, probably already abolished in the great towns where there were hostelries. "The labourer," said he, "is worthy of his hire?" Once installed in any house, they were to remain there, eating and drinking what was offered them, as long as their mission lasted.

Jesus desired that, in imitation of his example, the messengers of the glad tidings should render their preaching agreeable by kindly and polished manners. He directed that, on entering into a house, they should give the salaam or greeting. Some hesitated; the salaam being then, as now, in

the East, a sign of religious communion, which is not risked with persons of a doubtful faith. "Fear nothing," said Jesus; "if no one in the house is worthy of your salute, it will return unto you." Sometimes, in fact, the apostles of the kingdom of God were badly received, and came to complain to Jesus, who generally sought to soothe them. Some of them, persuaded of the omnipotence of their master, were hurt at this forbearance. The sons of Zebedee wanted him to call down fire from heaven upon the inhospitable towns. Jesus received these outbursts with a subtle irony, and stopped them by saying:—"The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

The germ of a church from this time began to appear. This fertile idea of the power of men in association (*ecclesia*) was doubtless derived from Jesus. Full of the purely idealistic doctrine that it is the union of love which brings souls together, he declared that whenever men assembled in his name, he would be in their midst. He confided to the Church the right to bind and to unbind (that is to say, to render certain things lawful or unlawful), to remit sins, to reprimand, to warn with authority, and to pray with the certainty of being heard. It is possible that many of these words may have been attributed to the Master, in order to give a warrant to the collective authority which was afterwards sought to be substituted for that of Jesus. At all events, it was only after his death that particular churches were established, and even this first constitution was made purely and simply on the model of the synagogue. Many personages who had loved Jesus much, and had founded great hopes upon him, as, Joseph of Arimathea, Lazarus, Mary Magdalen, and Nicodemus, did not, it seems, join these churches, but clung to the tender or respectful memory which they had preserved of him.



It is unnecessary to remark how remote from the thought of Jesus was the idea of a religious book, containing a code and articles of faith. Not only did he not write, but it was contrary to the spirit of the infant sect to produce sacred books. They believed themselves on the eve of the great final catastrophe. The Messiah came to put the seal upon the Law and the Prophets, not to promulgate new Scriptures. Further, with the exception of the Apocalypse, which was in one sense the only revealed book of the infant Christianity, all the other writings of the apostolic age were works evoked by existing circumstances, making no pretensions to furnish a completely dogmatic whole. The Gospels had at first an entirely personal character, and much less authority than tradition.

Had the sect, however, not some sacrament, some rite, some sign of union? It had one which all tradition ascribes to Jesus. One of the favourite notions of the Master was that he was the new bread, bread very superior to manna, and on which mankind was to live. This notion, the germ of the Eucharist, was at times expressed by him in singularly concrete forms. On one occasion especially, in the synagogue of Capernaum, he took a decided step, which cost him several of his disciples. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." And he added,—"I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." It is probable that, in the common repasts of the sect, there was established some custom to which such a discourse had reference. But the apostolic traditions on this subject are very diverse, and probably intentionally incomplete. The three first gospels suppose that a unique sacramental act, served as a basis to the mysterious rite,

and declare this to have been "the Last Supper." John, who has preserved to us the incident at the synagogue of Capernaum, does not speak of such an act, although he describes the Last Supper at great length. Elsewhere we see Jesus recognised in the breaking of bread, as if this act had been to those who associated with him the most important of his life. When he was dead, the form under which he appeared to the pious memory of his disciples, was that of president of a mysterious banquet, taking the bread, blessing it, breaking and giving it to those present. It is probable that this was one of his habits, and that at such times he was particularly loving and tender. One material circumstance, the presence of fish upon the table (a striking indication, which proves that the rite had its birth on the shore of the Lake Tiberias), was itself almost sacramental, and became a necessary part of the conceptions of the sacred feast.

Their repasts had become the sweetest moments of the infant community. At these times they all assembled; the Master spoke to each one, and kept up a charming and lively conversation. Jesus loved these seasons, and was pleased to see his spiritual family thus grouped around him. The participation of the same bread was considered as a kind of communion, a reciprocal bond. The Master used, in this respect, extremely strong terms, which were afterwards taken in a very literal sense. Jesus was, at once, very idealistic in his conceptions, and very materialistic in his expression of them. Wishing to express the thought that the believer lives only by him, that altogether (body, blood, and soul) he was the life of the truly faithful, he said to his disciples, "I am your nourishment"—a phrase which, turned into figurative style, became, "My flesh is your bread, my blood your drink." Then

the modes of speech employed by Jesus, always strongly subjective, carried him yet further. At table, pointing to the food, he said, "I am here"—holding the bread—"this is my body;" holding up the wine, "This is my blood"—all modes of speech which were equivalent to, "I am your nourishment."

This mysterious rite obtained in the lifetime of Jesus great importance. It was probably established some time before the last journey to Jerusalem, and it was the result of a general doctrine much more than a determinate act. After the death of Jesus, it became the great symbol of Christian communion, and it is to the most solemn moment of the life of the Saviour that its establishment is referred. It was wished to be shown in the consecration of bread and wine, a farewell memorial which Jesus, at the moment of quitting life, had left to his disciples. They recognised Jesus himself in this sacrament. The wholly spiritual idea of the presence of souls, which was one of the most familiar to the Master, which made him say, for instance, that he was present in person with his disciples when they were assembled in his name, rendered this easily admissible. In the degree of exaltation to which he had attained, the ideal surpassed everything to such an extent that the body counted for nothing. We are one when we love one another, when we live in dependence on each other; it was thus that he and his disciples were one. His disciples adopted the same language. Those who for years had lived with him, had seen him constantly take the bread and the cup "between his holy and venerable hands," and thus offer himself to them. It was he whom they ate and drank; he became the true Passover, the former one having been abrogated by his blood. It is impossible to translate into our essentially hard and fast idiom, in which a rigorous

distinction between the material and the metaphorical must always be observed, habits of style whose essential character is to attribute to metaphor, or rather to the idea it represents, a complete reality.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### OPPOSITION TO JESUS.

DURING the first period of his career, Jesus does not appear to have met with any serious opposition. His preaching, thanks to the extreme liberty which was enjoyed in Galilee, and to the number of teachers who arose on all sides, made no noise outside a restricted circle. But when Jesus entered upon a career brilliant with public success, the storm began to gather. More than once he was obliged to conceal himself and fly. Antipas, however, did not interfere with him, although Jesus expressed himself sometimes very severely respecting him. At Tiberias, his usual residence, the Tetrarch was only one or two leagues distant from the district chosen by Jesus for the centre of his activity; he was told of his miracles, which he doubtless took to be clever tricks, and desired to see them. The incredulous were at that time very curious about this class of illusions. With his ordinary tact, Jesus refused. He took care not to be led astray by an irreligious world, which wished to extort from him some idle amusement; he aspired only to gain the people; he reserved for the simple, means suitable to them alone.

On one occasion, the report was spread that Jesus was no other than John the Baptist risen from the

dead. Antipas became anxious and uneasy; and employed artifice to rid his dominions of the new prophet. Certain Pharisees, under the pretence of regard for Jesus, came to tell him that Antipas was seeking to kill him. Jesus, despite his great simplicity, saw the snare, and did not depart. His peaceful manners, and his remoteness from popular agitation, ultimately reassured the Tetrarch and dissipated the danger.

The new doctrine was by no means received with equal favour in all the towns of Galilee. Not only did incredulous Nazareth continue to reject him who was to become her glory; not only did his brothers persist in not believing in him, but the cities of the lake themselves, in general well-disposed, were not all converted. Jesus often complained of the incredulity and hardness of heart which he encountered, and although it is natural that in such reproaches we make allowance for a certain kind of exaggeration, which Jesus affected in imitation of John the Baptist, it is clear that the country was far from yielding itself entirely a second time to the kingdom of God. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida!" cried he; "for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." "The queen of the south," added he, "shall rise up in the judgment against the men of this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came

from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas is here." His roaming life, at first so full of charm, now began to weigh upon him. "The foxes," said he, "have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man had not where to lay his head." He accused unbelievers of not yielding to evidence, and said that, even at the moment in which the Son of Man should appear in his celestial glory, there would still be men who would not believe in him.

The invincible obstacle to the ideas of Jesus came especially from orthodox Judaism, represented by the Pharisees. Jesus became more and more alienated from the ancient Law. Now, the Pharisees were the true Jews; the nerve and sinew of Judaism. Although this party had its centre at Jerusalem, it had adherents either established in Galilee, or who often came there. They were, in general, men of a narrow mind, caring much for externals; their devoutness was haughty, formal, and self-satisfied. Their manners were ridiculous, and excited the smiles of even those who respected them. The epithets which the people gave them, and which savour of caricature, prove this. There was the "bandy-legged Pharisee" (*Nikfi*), who walked in streets dragging his feet and knocking them against the stones; the "bloody-browed Pharisee" (*Kizat*), who went with his eyes shut in order not to see the women, and dashed his head so much against the walls that it was always bloody; the "pestle Pharisee" (*Medinkia*), who kept himself bent double like the handle of a pestle; the "Pharisee of strong shoulders" (*Shikmi*), who walked with his back bent as if he carried on his shoulders the

whole burden of the Law; the "*What-is-there-to-do? I-do-it Pharisee*," always on the search for a precept to fulfil; and, lastly, the "*dyed Pharisee*," whose externals of devotion were but a varnish of hypocrisy. This rigorism was, in fact, often only apparent, and concealed in reality great moral laxity. The people, nevertheless, were duped by it. The people, whose instinct is always right, even when it is most astray respecting individuals, are very easily deceived by false devotees. That which they love in them is good and worthy of being loved; but they have not sufficient penetration to distinguish the appearance from the reality.

It is easy to understand the antipathy which, in such an impassioned state of society, would necessarily break out between Jesus and persons of this character. Jesus recognised only the religion of the heart, whilst that of the Pharisees consisted almost exclusively in observances. Jesus sought the humble and outcasts of all kinds, and the Pharisees saw in this an insult to their religion of respectability. The Pharisee was an infallible and faultless man, a pedant always right, taking the first place in the synagogue, praying in the street, giving alms to the sound of a trumpet, and caring greatly for salutations. Jesus maintained that each one ought to await the judgment of God with fear and trembling. The bad religious tendency represented by Pharisaism did not reign without opposition. Many men before or during the time of Jesus, such as Jesus, son of Sirach (one of the true ancestors of Jesus of Nazareth), Gamaliel, Antigonus of Soco, and especially the gentle and noble Hillel, had taught much more elevated, and almost Gospel doctrines. But these good seeds had been choked. The beautiful maxims of Hillel, summing up the whole law as equity, those of Jesus, son of Sirach, making worship consist in

doing good, were forgotten or anathematised. Shammai, with his narrow and exclusive spirit, had prevailed. An enormous mass of "traditions" had stifled the Law, under pretext of protecting and interpreting it.

The conflicts of Jesus with official hypocrisy were continual. The Puritan reformer is, as a rule, essentially "biblical," setting out with the unchangeable text in order to criticise the current theology, which has changed from generation to generation. Thus acted later the Jews, the Karaites, the Christians, and the Protestants. Jesus applied the axe to the root of the tree much more energetically. We see him sometimes, it is true, quoting texts against the false traditions of the Pharisees. But in general it was the conscience to which he appealed. With one stroke he cut through both text and commentaries. He showed indeed to the Pharisees that by their traditions they seriously perverted Mosaism, but he by no means pretended himself to return to Mosaism. His mission had to do with the future, not with the past. Jesus was more than the reformer of an obsolete religion; he was the founder of the eternal religion of humanity.

Disputes broke out especially respecting a number of external practices introduced by tradition, which neither Jesus nor his disciples observed. The Pharisees reproached him sharply for this. When he dined with them, he scandalised them much by not going through the customary ablutions. "Give alms," said he, "of such things as ye have; and behold, all things are clean unto you." That which in the highest degree wounded his refined feeling was the air of assurance which the Pharisees carried into religious matters; their paltry worship, which ended in a vain seeking after precedents and titles, and not to the improvement of their hearts. An admirable parable expressed this thought with



infinite charm and justice. "Two men," said he, "went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other."

A hatred, which death alone could satisfy, was the consequence of these struggles. John the Baptist had already provoked enmities of the same kind. But the aristocrats of Jerusalem, who despised him, had not opposed simple men in regarding him as a prophet. In this case, however, the war was to the death. It was a new spirit that had appeared in the world, shattering all that had preceded it. John the Baptist was a thorough Jew; Jesus was scarcely one at all. Jesus always appealed to the delicacy of the moral sentiment. Even in Galilee the Pharisees sought to ruin him, and employed against him the manœuvre which ultimately succeeded at Jerusalem. They endeavoured to interest in their quarrel the partisans of the new political order which was established. The facilities Jesus found for escape into Galilee, and the weakness of the government of Antipas, baffled these attempts. He exposed himself to danger of his own free-will. He saw clearly that his action, if he remained interned in Galilee, was necessarily limited. Judea attracted him as by a charm; he wished to try a last effort to gain over the rebellious city; and seemed anxious to fulfil the proverb—that a prophet must not die outside Jerusalem.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## LAST JOURNEY OF JESUS TO JERUSALEM.

JESUS had for a long time a sense of the dangers that surrounded him. During a period of time which we may estimate at eighteen months, he avoided going on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. At the Feast of Tabernacles of the year 32 (according to the hypothesis we have adopted), his relations, always malevolent and incredulous, pressed him to go there. The evangelist, John, seems to insinuate that there was some hidden project to ruin him in this invitation. "Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world." Jesus, suspecting some treachery, at first refused; but when the caravan of pilgrims had set out, he started on the journey, unknown to every one, and almost alone. It was the last farewell which he bade to Galilee. The Feast of Tabernacles fell at the autumnal equinox. Six months still had to run before the fatal *dénouement*. But during this interval, Jesus did not see again his beloved provinces of the north. The pleasant days had passed away; he must now traverse, step by step, the painful path that will terminate only in the anguish of death.

His disciples, and the pious women who tended him, found him again in Judea. But how much everything there was changed for him! Jesus was a stranger at Jerusalem. He felt that there was a wall of resistance he could not pierce. Surrounded by snares and difficulties, he was un-

ceasingly pursued by the ill-will of the Pharisees. Instead of that illimitable faculty of belief, happy gift of youthful natures, which he found in Galilee—instead of those good and gentle people, amongst whom objections (always the fruit of a kind of ill-will and indocility) had no existence, he encountered there at each step an obstinate incredulity, upon which the means of action that had so well succeeded in the north had little effect. His disciples were despised as being Galileans. Nicodemus, who, on one of his former journeys, had a conversation with him by night, almost compromised himself with the Sanhedrim, by having wished to defend him. “Art thou also of Galilee?” they said to him. “Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.”

The city, as we have already said, was disliked by Jesus. Until then he had always eschewed great centres, preferring for his action the country and the towns of small importance. Many of the precepts which he gave to his apostles were absolutely inapplicable, except in a simple society of humble men. Having no idea of the world, and accustomed to the amiable communism of Galilee, remarks continually escaped him, the simplicity of which at Jerusalem would appear very singular. His imagination and his love of nature found themselves restrained within these walls. True religion does not proceed from the tumult of towns, but from the tranquil serenity of the fields.

The arrogance of the priests rendered the precincts of the temple disagreeable to him. One day some of his disciples, who knew Jerusalem better than he, wished him to remark the beauty of the buildings of the temple, the admirable choice of materials, and the richness of the votive offerings that covered the walls. “Seest thou these buildings?” said he; “there shall not be left one stone

upon another." He refused to praise anything, unless it was a poor widow who passed at that moment, and threw a small coin into the box. "She has cast in more than they all," said he; "for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had." This manner of criticising all he observed at Jerusalem, of praising the poor who gave little, of slighting the rich who gave much, and of blaming the opulent priesthood who did nothing for the good of the people, naturally exasperated the sacerdotal caste. As the seat of a conservative aristocracy, the temple, like the Mussulman *haram* which succeeded it, was the last place in the world where revolution could succeed. It was the centre of the Jewish life, the point where it was necessary to conquer or die. On this Calvary, where certainly Jesus suffered more than at Golgotha, his days passed away in disputation and bitterness, in the midst of tedious controversies respecting canonical law and exegesis, for which his great moral elevation, instead of giving him the advantage, positively unfitted him.

In the midst of this troubled life, the sensitive and kindly heart of Jesus found a refuge, where he enjoyed moments of sweetness. After having passed the day disputing in the temple, towards evening Jesus descended into the valley of Kedron, and rested a while in the orchard of a farming establishment (probably for the making of oil) named Gethsemane, which served as a pleasure garden to the inhabitants. Thence he proceeded to pass the night upon the Mount of Olives, which limits the horizon of the city on the east. This side is the only one, in the environs of Jerusalem, which offers an aspect in any degree pleasing and verdant. The plantations of olives, figs, and palms were numerous there, and gave their names to the villages,

farms, or enclosures of Bethphage, Gethsemane, and Bethany. There were upon the Mount of Olives two great cedars, the memory of which was long preserved amongst the dispersed Jews; their branches served as an asylum to clouds of doves, and under their shade were established small bazaars. All this precinct was in a manner the abode of Jesus and his disciples; they knew it field by field and house by house.

The village of Bethany in particular, situated at the summit of the hill, upon the incline which commands the Dead Sea and the Jordan, at a journey of an hour and a half from Jerusalem, was the place especially beloved by Jesus. He there made the acquaintance of a family composed of three persons, two sisters and a brother, whose friendship had a great charm for him. Of the two sisters, the one, named Martha, was an obliging, kind, and assiduous person; the other, named Mary, on the contrary, pleased Jesus by a sort of languor, and by her strongly-developed speculative instincts. Seated at the feet of Jesus, she often forgot, in listening to him, the duties of real life. Her sister, upon whom fell all the duty at such times, gently complained. "Martha, Martha," said Jesus to her, "thou art troubled, and carest about many things; now, one thing only is needful. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away." Her brother, Eleazar, or Lazarus, was also much beloved by Jesus. Lastly, a certain Simon, the leper, who was the owner of the house, formed, it appears, part of the family. It was there, in the enjoyment of a pious friendship, that Jesus forgot the vexations of public life. In this tranquil home he consoled himself for the bickerings with which the scribes and the Pharisees unceasingly surrounded him. He often sat on the Mount of Olives, facing Mount Moriah, having beneath his view the splendid

perspective of the terraces of the temple, and its roofs covered with glittering plates of metal. This view struck strangers with admiration; at the rising of the sun, especially, the sacred mountain dazzled the eyes, and appeared like a mass of snow and of gold. But a profound feeling of sadness poisoned for Jesus the spectacle that filled all other Israelites with joy and pride. He cried out, in his moments of bitterness, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."

It was not that many good people here, as in Galilee, were not touched; but such was the power of the dominant orthodoxy, that very few dared to confess it. They feared to discredit themselves in the eyes of the Hierosolymites by placing themselves in the school of a Galilean. They would have risked being driven from the synagogue, which, in a mean and bigoted society, was the greatest degradation. Excommunication, besides, carried with it the confiscation of all possessions. By ceasing to be a Jew, a man did not become a Roman; but remained without protection, in the power of a theocratic legislation of the most atrocious severity. One day, the inferior officers of the temple, who had been present at one of the discourses of Jesus, and had been enchanted with it, came to confide their doubts to the priests: "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" was the reply to them; "but this people who knoweth not the Law are cursed." Jesus remained thus at Jerusalem, a provincial admired by provincials like himself, but rejected by all the aristocracy of the nation. The chiefs of schools and of sects were too numerous for any one to be stirred by seeing one more appear. His voice made little noise in Jerusalem. The

prejudices of race and of sect, the direct enemies of the spirit of the Gospel, were too deeply rooted there.

His teaching in this new world necessarily became much modified. His beautiful discourses, the effect of which was always observable upon youthful imaginations and consciences morally pure, here fell upon stone. He who was so much at his ease on the shores of his charming little lake, felt constrained and not at home in the company of pedants. His perpetual self-assertion appeared somewhat fastidious. He was obliged to become controversialist, jurist, exegetist, and theologian. His conversations, generally so full of charm, became a rolling fire of disputes, an interminable train of scholastic battles. His harmonious genius was wasted in insipid argumentations upon the Law and the prophets, in which we should have preferred not seeing him sometimes play the part of aggressor. He lent himself with a condescension we cannot but regret to the captious criticisms to which the merciless cavillers subjected him. In general, he extricated himself from difficulties with much skill. His reasonings, it is true, were often subtle (simplicity of mind and subtlety touch each other; when simplicity reasons, it is often a little sophistical); we find that sometimes he courted misconceptions, and prolonged them intentionally; his reasoning, judged according to the rules of Aristotelian logic, was very weak. But when the unequalled charm of his mind could be displayed, he was triumphant. One day it was intended to embarrass him by presenting to him an adulteress and asking him what was to be done to her. We know the admirable answer of Jesus. The fine raillery of a man of the world, tempered by a divine goodness, could not be expressed in a more exquisite manner. But the wit which is allied to moral grandeur is that which

fools forgive the least. In pronouncing this sentence of so just and pure a taste: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her," Jesus pierced hypocrisy to the heart, and with the same stroke sealed his own death-warrant.

It is probable, in fact, that but for the exasperation caused by so many bitter shafts, Jesus might long have remained unnoticed, and have been lost in the dreadful storm which was soon about to overwhelm the whole Jewish nation. The high priesthood and the Sadducees had rather disdained than hated him. The great sacerdotal families, the *Boëthusim*, the family of Hanan, were only fanatical in their conservatism. The Sadducees, like Jesus, rejected the "traditions" of the Pharisees. By a very strange singularity, it was these unbelievers who, denying the resurrection, the oral Law, and the existence of angels, were the true Jews. Or rather, as the old Law in its simplicity no longer satisfied the religious wants of the time, those who strictly adhered to it, and rejected modern inventions, were regarded by the devotees as impious, just as an evangelical Protestant of the present day is regarded as an unbeliever in Catholic countries. At all events, from such a party no very strong reaction against Jesus could proceed. The official priesthood, with its attention turned towards political power, and intimately connected with it, did not comprehend these enthusiastic movements. It was the middle class Pharisees, the innumerable *soferim*, or scribes, living on the science of "traditions," who took the alarm, and whose prejudices and interests were in reality threatened by the doctrine of the new teacher.

\*One of the most constant efforts of the Pharisees was to draw Jesus into the discussion of political questions, and to compromise him as being connected with the party of Judas the Gaulonite.



These tactics were clever; for it required all the great ingenuity of Jesus to avoid conflict with the Roman authority, whilst he was proclaiming the kingdom of God. They sought to break through this ambiguity, and compel him to explain himself. One day, a group of Pharisees, and of those politicians named "Herodians" (probably some of the *Boëthusim*), approached him, and, under pretence of pious zeal, said unto him, "Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man. Tell us, therefore, what thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?" They hoped for an answer, which would give them a pretext for delivering him up to Pilate. The reply of Jesus was admirable. He made them show him the image on the coin: "Render," said he, "unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's"—sage words, which have decided the future of Christianity—words of a perfected spiritualism, and of marvellous justness, which have established the separation between the spiritual and the temporal, and laid the basis of true liberalism and true civilisation!

His gentle and penetrating genius inspired him when alone with his disciples with accents full of tenderness! "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. The sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. He goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth. I

am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine; and I lay down my life for the sheep." The idea that the crisis of humanity was close at hand frequently recurred to him: "Now," said he, "learn a parable of the fig-tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."

His powerful eloquence always burst forth when contending with hypocrisy. "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat, All, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

"But all their works they do to be seen of men; they make broad their phylacteries, enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. Woe unto them! . . .

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge, shut up the kingdom of heaven against men! for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, for ye devour widows' houses, and, for a pretence, make long prayers: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves! Woe unto you, for ye are as graves which appear not; and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.

"Ye fools, and blind! for ye pay tithe of mint

and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you!

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, ‘If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.’ Wherefore, be ye witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. ‘Therefore also,’ said the Wisdom of God, ‘I will send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city. That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.’ Verily, I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation.”

His terrible doctrine of the substitution of the Gentiles—the idea that the kingdom of God was

about to be transferred to others, because those for whom it was destined would not receive it, is used as a fearful menace against the aristocracy. The title "Son of God," which he openly assumed in striking parables, wherein his enemies appeared as murderers of the heavenly messengers, was an open defiance to the Judaism of the Law. The bold appeal he addressed to the poor was still more seditious. He declared that he had "come that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind." One day, his dislike of the temple forced from him an imprudent speech: "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands." His disciples found strained allegories in this sentence; but we do not know what meaning Jesus attached to it. But as only a pretext was wanted, this sentence was quickly laid hold of. It reappeared in the preamble of his death-warrant, and rang in his ears amidst the last agonies of Golgotha. These irritating discussions always ended in tumult. The Pharisees threw stones at him; in doing which they only fulfilled an article of the Law, which commanded every prophet, even a thaumaturgus, who should turn the people from the ancient worship, to be stoned without a hearing. At other times they called him mad, possessed, Samaritan, and even sought to kill him. These words were taken note of in order to invoke against him the laws of an intolerant theocracy, which the Roman government had not yet abrogated.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### MACHINATIONS OF THE ENEMIES OF JESUS.

JESUS passed the autumn and a part of the winter at Jerusalem. This season is there rather cold. The

portico of Solomon, with its covered aisles, was the place where he habitually walked. This portico consisted of two galleries, formed by three rows of columns, and covered by a ceiling of carved wood. It commanded the valley of Kedron, which was doubtless less covered with *débris* than it is at the present time. The depth of the ravine could not be measured, from the height of the portico; and it seemed, in consequence of the angle of the slopes, as if an abyss opened immediately beneath the wall. The other side of the valley even at that time was adorned with sumptuous tombs. Some of the monuments, which may be seen at the present day, were perhaps those cenotaphs in honour of ancient prophets which Jesus pointed out, when, seated under the portico, he denounced the official classes, who covered their hypocrisy or their vanity by these colossal piles.

At the end of the month of December, he celebrated at Jerusalem the feast established by Judas Maccabæus in memory of the purification of the temple after the sacrileges of Antiochus Epiphanes. It was also called the "Feast of Lights," because, during the eight days of the feast, lamps were kept lighted in the houses. Jesus undertook soon after a journey into Perea and to the banks of the Jordan—that is to say, into the same country he had visited some years previously, when he belonged to the school of John, and in which he himself had administered baptism. He seems to have reaped some consolation from this journey, specially at Jericho. This city, either as the terminus of several important routes, or on account of its gardens of spices and its rich cultivation, was a customs station of some importance. The chief receiver, Zacchæus, a rich man, desired to see Jesus. As he was of small stature, he mounted a sycamore tree near the road which the procession had to pass. Jesus was

touched with this condescension in a person of consideration, and at the risk of giving offence, he went to the house of Zacchæus. There was much murmuring at his thus honouring the house of a sinner by a visit. In parting, Jesus described his host as a good son of Abraham; and, as if to add to the vexation of the orthodox, Zacchæus became a Christian; he gave, it is said, the half of his goods to the poor, and restored the double to those whom he might have wronged. Further; this was not the only pleasure Jesus experienced there. On leaving the town, the beggar Bartimæus pleased him much by persisting in calling him "son of David," although he was told to be silent. The cycle of Galilean miracles appeared for a time to recommence in this country, a country similar in many respects to the provinces of the north. The delightful oasis of Jericho, at that time well watered, must have been one of the most beautiful places in Syria. Josephus speaks of it with the same admiration as of Galilee, and calls it, like the latter province, a "divine country."

After Jesus had completed this kind of pilgrimage to the scenes of his earliest prophetic activity, he returned to his beloved abode in Bethany. The exasperation of his enemies was complete. From that time a council of the chief priests was assembled, and in this council the question was pointedly put: "Can Jesus and Judaism exist together?" To raise the question was to resolve it: and without being a prophet, as thought by the evangelist, the high priest could easily pronounce his cruel axiom: "It is expedient that one man should die for the people."

"The high priest of that same year," to use an expression of the fourth Gospel, which shows clearly the state of abasement to which the sovereign pontificate was reduced, was Joseph Kāïapha, appointed by Valerius Gratus, and entirely devoted

to the Romans. From the time that Jerusalem had been under the government of procurators, the office of high priest had been a temporary one; changes in it took place nearly every year. Kaiapha, however, held it longer than any one else. He had assumed his office in the year 25, and he did not lose it till the year 36. His character is unknown to us, but many circumstances lead to the belief that his power was only nominal. In fact, another personage is always seen in conjunction with, and even superior to him, who, at the decisive moment we have now reached, seems to have exercised a preponderating power.

This personage was Hanan or Annas, son of Seth, and father-in-law of Kaiapha, who was formerly the high-priest, and had in reality preserved amidst the numerous changes of the Pontificate all the authority of the office. He had received the high priesthood from the legate Quirinius, in the year 7 of our era. He lost his office in the year 14, on the accession of Tiberius; but he continued to be much respected and to be called "high priest," although he was out of office, and he was consulted upon all important matters. During fifty years the Pontificate continued in his family almost uninterruptedly; five of his sons successively sustained this dignity, not counting Kaiapha, who was his son-in-law. His was called the "priestly family," as if the priesthood had become hereditary in it. The chief offices of the temple were almost all filled by them. Another family, that of Boëthus, alternated, it is true, with that of Hanan's in the Pontificate. It was that of Boëthus. But the *Boëthusim*, whose fortunes were not of very honourable origin, were much less esteemed by the pious middle class. Hanan was then in reality the chief of the priestly party. Kaiapha did nothing without him; it was the custom to associate their names,

and Hanan's was always put first. It will be understood, in fact, that under this *régime* of an annual Pontificate, changed according to the caprice of the procurators, an old high priest, who had preserved the secret of the traditions, who had seen many younger than himself succeed each other, and who had retained sufficient influence to get the office delegated to persons who were subordinate to him in family rank, must have been a very important personage. Like all the aristocracy of the temple, he was a Sadducee, "a sect," says Josephus, "particularly severe in its judgments." All his sons were, moreover, violent persecutors. One of them, named like his father, Hanan, caused James, the brother of the Lord, to be stoned, under circumstances not unlike those connected with the death of Jesus. The temper of the family was haughty, bold, and cruel; it had that particular kind of proud and sullen wickedness which characterises Jewish politicians. Thus, upon this Hanan and his family must rest the responsibility of all the acts which followed. It was Hanan (or, if you like, the party he represented) who killed Jesus. Hanan was the principal actor in the terrible drama, and far more than Pilate, ought to bear the weight of the maledictions of mankind.

It is in the mouth of Kaiapha that the evangelist puts the decisive words which led to the sentence of death being passed on Jesus. It was supposed that the high priest possessed a certain gift of prophecy; his words thus became an oracle full of profound meaning to the Christian community. But such a sentence, whoever he might be that pronounced it, expressed the feeling of the whole sacerdotal party. This party was much opposed to popular seditions. It sought to put down religious enthusiasts, rightly foreseeing that by their excited preachings they would lead to the total ruin of the nation. Although



the excitement created by Jesus had nothing temporal about it, the priests saw, as an ultimate consequence of this agitation, an aggravation of the Roman yoke and the overturning of the temple, the source of their riches and honours. Certainly the causes which, thirty-seven years after, were to effect the ruin of Jerusalem, did not proceed from infant Christianity. They arose in Jerusalem itself, and not in Galilee. We cannot say, however, that the motive alleged in this circumstance by the priests was so improbable that we must necessarily regard it as insincere. In a general sense, Jesus, if he had succeeded, would have really effected the ruin of the Jewish nation. According to the principles, universally admitted by all ancient polity, Hanan and Kaiapha were right in saying: "Better the death of one man than the ruin of a people!" In our opinion this reasoning is detestable. But it has been that of conservative parties from the commencement of all human society. The "party of order" (I use this expression in its mean and narrow sense) has ever been the same. Deeming the highest duty of government to be the prevention of popular disturbances, it believes it performs an act of patriotism in preventing, by judicial murder, the tumultuous effusion of blood. Little thoughtful of the future, it does not dream that by declaring war against all innovations, it incurs the risk of crushing ideas destined one day to triumph. The death of Jesus was one of the thousand illustrations of this policy. The movement he directed was entirely spiritual, but it was still a movement; hence the men of order, persuaded that it was essential for humanity not to be disturbed, felt themselves bound to prevent the new movement from extending itself. Never was seen a more striking example as to how much such a course of procedure defeats its own object. Left alone, Jesus would have exhausted

himself in a desperate struggle with the impossible. The unintelligent hate of his enemies decided the success of his work, and sealed his divinity.

The death of Jesus was thus resolved upon from the month of February or the beginning of March. But he escaped yet for a short time. He withdrew to an obscure town called Ephraim or Ephron, in the direction of Bethel, a short day's journey from Jerusalem. He spent a few days there with his disciples, allowing the storm to pass over. But the order to arrest him the moment he appeared at Jerusalem was given. The feast of the Passover was drawing nigh, and it was thought that Jesus, according to his custom, would come to celebrate it at Jerusalem.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### LAST WEEK OF JESUS.

JESUS did, in fact, set out with his disciples to see, for the last time, the unbelieving city. The hopes of his followers were more and more exalted. All believed that, in his going up to Jerusalem, the kingdom of God was about to be manifested there. The impiety of men being at its height, was regarded as a great sign that the consummation was at hand. The belief in this was such, that they already disputed for precedence in the kingdom. This was, it is said, the moment chosen by Salome to ask, on behalf of her sons, the two seats on the right and left of the Son of Man. The Master, on the other hand, was beset by grave thoughts. Sometimes he allowed a gloomy resentment against his enemies to appear. He related the parable of a

nobleman, who went to take possession of a kingdom in a far country; but hardly had he set out when his fellow-citizens rid themselves of him. The king returned, and commanded that those who had conspired against him should be brought before him, and he had them all put to death. At other times he peremptorily destroyed the illusions of the disciples. As they walked along the stony roads to the north of Jerusalem, Jesus pensively preceded the group of his companions. All regarded him in silence, experiencing a feeling of fear, and not daring to interrogate him. He had spoken to them already on various occasions of his future sufferings, and they had listened to him reluctantly. Jesus at length spoke out, and no longer concealing from them his presentiments, discoursed on his approaching end. There was great sadness in the whole band. The disciples were expecting soon to see the sign appear in the clouds. The inaugural cry of the kingdom of God: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," resounded already in joyous accents through the company. Jesus' fearful prospect troubled them. At each step of the fatal road, the kingdom of God became nearer or more remote in the mirage of their dreams. For himself, he was confirmed in the idea that he was about to die, but that his death would save the world. The misunderstanding between him and his disciples became greater each moment.

The custom was to go to Jerusalem several days before the Passover, in order to prepare for the feast. Jesus was the last to arrive, and at one time his enemies believed they were frustrated in the hope that they had of seizing him. The sixth day before the feast (Saturday, 8th of Nisan, the 28th March) he at last reached Bethany. He descended thence, according to his custom, to the house of Lazarus, Martha and Mary, or of Simon the leper. They

gave him a great reception. There was a dinner at Simon the leper's, at which many persons assembled, attracted by the desire of seeing him. Martha, as was her wont, served. It seems that they sought, by an increased show of respect, to overcome the coolness of the public, and to assert strongly the high dignity of the guest they received. Mary, in order to give to the feast a greater appearance of festivity, entered during dinner, carrying a vase of perfume which she poured upon the feet of Jesus. She afterwards broke the vase, following an ancient custom of breaking the vessel that had been used in the entertainment of a stranger of distinction. Finally, pushing the evidences of her cult to a point hitherto unheard of, she prostrated herself and wiped with her long hair the feet of the Master. The house was filled with the odour of the perfume, to the great delight of every one except the avaricious Judas of Kerioth. If we consider the economical habits of the community, this was certainly prodigality. The greedy treasurer reckoned up immediately how much the perfume might have been sold for, and what it would have realised for the poor-box. This not very affectionate feeling, which seemed to place something above him dissatisfied Jesus. He loved honours; for honours furthered his aim and established his title of "Son of David." So, when they spoke to him of the poor, he replied rather sharply: "Ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always." And, rising to the occasion, he promised immortality to the woman, who in this critical moment gave him a token of love.

The next day (Sunday, 9th of Nisan), Jesus descended from Bethany to Jerusalem. When, at a bend of the road upon the summit of the Mount of Olives, he saw the city spread out before him, it is said he wept over it, and addressed to it a last

appeal. At the base of the mountain, a few steps from the gate, on entering the adjoining portion of the eastern wall of the city, which was called Bethphage, on account, no doubt, of the fig-trees with which it was planted, he once more experienced a momentary pleasure. His arrival was noised abroad. The Galileans who had come to the feast were highly elated, and prepared a little triumph for him. An ass was brought to him, followed, according to custom, by its colt. The Galileans spread their finest garments upon the back of this humble animal as saddle-cloths, and seated him thereon. Others, however, spread their garments upon the road and strewed it with green branches. The multitude which preceded and followed him, carrying palms, cried: "Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" Some persons even gave him the title of king of Israel. "Master, rebuke thy disciples," said the Pharisees to him. "If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out," replied Jesus, and he entered into the city. The Hierosolymites, who hardly knew him, asked who he was: "It is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth, in Galilee," was the reply. Jerusalem was a city of about 50,000 souls. A trifling event, like the entrance of a stranger, however little celebrated, or the arrival of a band of provincials, or a movement of people to the avenues of the city, could not fail, under ordinary circumstances, to be quickly noised about. But at the time of the feast, the confusion was extreme. Jerusalem at these times was taken possession of by strangers. It was amongst the latter also that the excitement appears to have been most lively. Some Greek-speaking proselytes, who had come to the feast, were piqued with curiosity, and wished to see Jesus. They addressed themselves to his disciples; but we do not know much of

the result of the interview. Jesus, according to his custom, went to pass the night at his beloved village of Bethany. The three following days (Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday) he descended regularly to Jerusalem; and, after the setting of the sun, he re-ascended either to Bethany, or to the farms on the western side of the Mount of Olives, where he had many friends.

A deep melancholy appears, during these last days, to have filled his soul, which was generally so gay and so serene. All the narratives agree in attributing to him, before his arrest, a short experience of doubt and trouble; a kind of anticipated agony. According to some, he cried out suddenly, "Now is my soul troubled. O Father, save me from this hour." It was believed that a voice from heaven was heard at this moment: others said that an angel came to console him. According to one widely-spread version, this occurred to him in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus, it was said, went about a stone's throw from his sleeping disciples, taking with him only Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, then fell on his face and prayed. His soul was sad even unto death; a terrible anguish weighed upon him; but resignation to the Divine will sustained him. That which is certain is that, during his last days, the enormous weight of the mission he had undertaken pressed cruelly upon Jesus. Human nature asserted itself for a time. Perhaps he began to hesitate about his work. Terror and doubt seized upon him, and threw him into a state of exhaustion worse than death. The man who sacrifices his repose, and the legitimate rewards of life, to a great idea, always experiences a moment of sad revulsion when the image of death presents itself to him for the first time, and seeks to persuade him that everything is vanity. Perhaps some of those touching reminiscences which the strongest souls

retain, and which at times pierce like a sword, seized upon him at this moment. Did he recall the clear fountains of Galilee where he might have refreshed himself; the vine and the fig-tree under which he might have sat down; the young maidens who, perhaps, might have consented to love him? Did he curse the hard destiny which had denied him the joys conceded to all others? Did he regret his too lofty nature, and (a victim of his greatness) did he grieve that he had not remained a simple artisan of Nazareth? We know not; for all these internal troubles were evidently to his disciples a sealed letter. They understood nothing of them, supplying by simple conjectures that which in the great soul of their Master was obscure to them. It is certain, at least, that his Divine nature soon regained the supremacy. He might still have avoided death; but he would not. Love for his work sustained him. He preferred to drink the cup to the dregs. Henceforth, in fact, we find Jesus entirely himself, wholly unclouded. The subtleties of the polemic, the credulity of the thaumaturgus and of the exorcist are forgotten. There remains only the incomparable hero of the Passion, the founder of the rights of free conscience, and the perfect model which all suffering souls will contemplate in order to fortify and console themselves.

The triumph of Bethphage—that audacity of the provincials in celebrating at the very gates of Jerusalem the advent of their Messiah-king—completed the exasperation of the Pharisees and the aristocracy of the temple. A new council was held on the Wednesday (12th of Nisan) in the house of Joseph Kaiapha. The immediate arrest of Jesus was resolved upon. A great idea of order and of conservative policy governed all their plans. The question was how to avoid a scene. As the feast of the Passover, which commenced that year on the

Friday evening, was a time of bustle and excitement, it was resolved to anticipate it. Jesus was popular; they feared an outbreak; the arrest was therefore fixed for the next day, Thursday. It was resolved, further, not to seize him in the temple, where he came every day, but to watch his habits, in order to seize him in some retired place. The agents of the priests sounded his disciples, hoping to obtain useful information by playing upon their weakness or their simplicity. They found what they sought in Judas of Kerioth. This wretched creature, from motives impossible to explain, betrayed his Master, gave all the particulars necessary, and even undertook himself (although such an excess of baseness is hardly credible) to conduct the band which was to make the arrest. The recollection of horror which the folly or the wickedness of this man has left in the Christian tradition must have been the cause of some exaggeration on this point. Judas up to this time had been a disciple like the others; he had even the title of apostle. Legend, which always employs highly-coloured language, will not admit in the supper-room more than eleven saints and one reprobate. Reality does not proceed by such absolute categories. Avarice, which the synoptics give as the motive of the crime in question, does not suffice to explain it. It would be very singular if a man who kept the bag, and who knew what he would lose by the death of his chief, were to exchange the profits of his occupation for a very small sum of money. Had the self-love of Judas been wounded by the rebuff he received at the dinner at Bethany? Even that would not suffice to explain his conduct. John would like to make him a thief, an unbeliever from the beginning, for which, however, there is no justification. We would prefer to attribute it to some feeling of jealousy, or to some internal dissension amongst the disciples. The peculiar hatred



John manifests towards Judas confirms this hypothesis. Less pure in heart than the others, Judas had imbibed, without knowing it, the narrow-mindedness of his office. By a caprice very common in active life, he had come to regard the interests of the purse as superior even to those of the work for which it was intended. The administrator had overcome the apostle. The murmurings which escaped him at Bethany seem to indicate that sometimes he considered that the Master cost his spiritual family too much. No doubt this mean economy had been the occasion of many other collisions in the little society.

Each minute, at this crisis, is solemn, and counts more than whole ages in the history of humanity. We have reached Thursday, 13th of Nisan (2nd April). The evening of the next day was the beginning of the festival of the Passover, begun by the feast at which the Paschal lamb was eaten. The festival continued for seven days, during which unleavened bread was used. The first and the last of these seven days had a peculiarly solemn character. The disciples were already occupied with preparations for the feast. As for Jesus, we are led to believe that he knew of the treachery of Judas, and that he was suspicious of the fate that awaited him. In the evening he took with his disciples his last repast. It was not the ritual feast of the Passover, as was afterwards supposed, owing to an error of a day in reckoning, but for the primitive church this supper of the Thursday was the true Passover, the seal of the new covenant. Each disciple connected with it his most cherished remembrances, and a multitude of touching traits of the Master which each one preserved were associated with this repast, which became the corner-stone of Christian piety, and the starting-point of the most fruitful institutions.

Doubtless the tender love which filled the heart of

Jesus for the little church which surrounded him overflowed at this moment. His strong and serene soul became joyous under the weight of the gloomy preoccupations that beset him. He had a word for each of his friends; John and Peter especially were the objects of attachment. John (at least according to his own account) was reclining on the divan, by the side of Jesus, his head resting upon the breast of the Master. Towards the end of the repast, the secret which weighed upon the heart of Jesus almost escaped him: he said, "Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." For these simple men this was a moment of anguish; they looked at each other, and each questioned himself. Judas was present; perhaps Jesus, who had had for some time reasons to distrust him, sought by this remark to draw from his looks or from his embarrassed manner the avowal of his fault. But the unfaithful disciple did not lose countenance; he even dared, it is said, to ask with the others: "Master, is it I?"

Meanwhile, the good and upright soul of Peter was in torture. He made a sign to John to endeavour to ascertain of whom the Master was speaking. John, who could converse with Jesus without being heard, asked him the meaning of this enigma. Jesus having only suspicions, did not wish to give any name; he only told John to observe him to whom he was going to offer the unleavened bread. At the same time, he soaked the bread and offered it to Judas. John and Peter alone were cognizant of the fact. Jesus addressed to Judas some words containing a bitter reproach, which were not understood by those present. They thought that Jesus was simply giving him orders for the morrow's feast, and he left the room.

At the time, this repast struck no one; and apart from the apprehensions which the Master confided to his disciples, who only half understood them,

nothing extraordinary took place. But after the death of Jesus, they attached to this evening a singular solemnity, and the imagination of believers spread over it a colouring of sweet mysticism. The last hours of a dear friend are those we best remember. By an inevitable allusion, we attribute to the conversation we have then had with him a sense that only death gives to them; we concentrate into a few hours the memories of many years. The majority of the disciples did not, after the supper of which we have just spoken, see their Master again: it was the farewell banquet. In this repast, as well as in many others, Jesus practised his mysterious rite of the breaking of bread. As it was early believed that the repast in question took place on the day of the Passover, and was the Paschal feast, the idea naturally arose that the Eucharistic institution was established at this supreme moment. Starting from the hypothesis that Jesus knew in advance the precise moment of his death, the disciples were led to suppose that he reserved for his last hours a number of important acts. As, moreover, one of the fundamental ideas of the first Christians was that the death of Jesus had been a sacrifice, replacing all those of the ancient Law, the "Last Supper," which was supposed to have taken place, once for all, on the eve of the Passion, became the chief sacrifice—the act which constituted the new alliance—the sign of the blood shed for the salvation of all. The bread and wine, placed in juxtaposition with death itself, were thus the image of the new testament that Jesus had sealed with his sufferings—the commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ until his advent.

A high sentiment of love, of concord, of charity, and of mutual deference animated, moreover, the remembrances which were believed to surround the last hours of Jesus. It is always the unity of his

Church, constituted by him or by his Spirit, which is the essence of the symbols and of the discourses which Christian tradition referred to this sacred moment: "A new commandment I give unto you," said he, "that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my father I have made known unto you. These things I command you, that ye love one another." At this last moment several rivalries and struggles for precedence again took place. Jesus remarked, that if he, the Master, had been in the midst of his disciples as their servant, how much more ought they to submit themselves to one another. According to some, in drinking the wine, he said, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom." According to others, he promised them soon a celestial feast, at which they would be seated on thrones by his side.

It seems that, towards the end of the evening, the presentiments of Jesus took hold of the disciples. All felt that a very serious danger threatened the Master, and that they were verging on a crisis. At one time Jesus thought of precautions, and spoke of swords. There were two in the company. "It is enough," said he. He did not, however, follow out this idea; he saw clearly that timid provincials could not stand up before the armed force of the great powers of Jerusalem. Peter, full of zeal and self-confidence, swore that he would go with him to prison and to death. Jesus, with his usual astuteness, expressed doubts concerning him. According to a tradition, which probably originated with Peter

himself, Jesus gave him till cock-crowing. All, like Peter, swore that they would not yield.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### ARREST AND TRIAL OF JESUS.

It was quite dark when they left the room. Jesus, as was his wont, passed through the valley of Kedron; and, accompanied by his disciples, went to the garden of Gethsemane, at the foot of the Mount of Olives, and sat down there. Overawing his friends by his great superiority, he watched and prayed. They were sleeping near him, when suddenly an armed troop appeared bearing lighted torches. It was the guards of the temple, armed with staves, a kind of brigade of police under the control of the priests. They were supported by a detachment of Roman soldiers with their swords. The order for the arrest emanated from the high priest and the Sanhedrim. Judas, knowing the habits of Jesus, had indicated this place as that where he might most easily be surprised. According to the unanimous tradition of the earliest times, Judas accompanied the detachment himself: according to some, he carried his hateful conduct even to the length of betraying him with a kiss. Be that as it may, certain it is that there was some show of resistance on the part of the disciples. One of them (Peter, according to eyewitnesses) drew his sword, and wounded one of the servants of the high priest, named Malchus, on the ear. Jesus put a stop to this resistance, and surrendered himself to the soldiers. Weak and incapable of acting with effect, especially against authorities with so

much prestige, the disciples took flight, and became dispersed; Peter and John alone did not lose sight of their Master. Another unknown young man wrapped in a light garment followed him. The authorities sought to arrest him, but the young man fled, leaving his tunic in the hands of the guards.

The course which the priests had resolved to pursue in regard to Jesus was quite in conformity with the established law. Their plan was to convict him, by the testimony of witnesses and by his own avowals, of blasphemy, and of outrage against the Mosaic religion, to condemn him to death according to law, and then to get the condemnation sanctioned by Pilate. The priestly authority, as we have already seen, was in reality entirely in the hands of Hanan. The order for the arrest, in all probability, came from him. It was before this powerful personage that Jesus was first brought. Hanan questioned him in regard to his doctrine and his disciples. Jesus, with justifiable pride, declined to enter into long explanations. He referred Hanan to his teachings, which had been public; he maintained he had never held any secret doctrine; and requested the ex-high priest to interrogate those who had listened to him. This was a perfectly natural response; but the idolatrous respect which surrounded the old priest made it appear audacious; and one of those present replied to it, it is said, by a blow.

Peter and John had followed their Master to the residence of Hanan. John, who was known in the house, was admitted without difficulty; but Peter was stopped at the entrance, and John was obliged to beg the porter to let him pass. The night was cold. Peter remained in the antechamber, and approached a brasier, around which the servants were warming themselves. He was soon recognised as a disciple of the accused. The unfortunate man,

betrayed by his Galilean accent, and pestered by questions from the servants, one of whom, a kinsman of Malchus, had seen him at Gethsemane, denied thrice that he had ever had the slightest connection with Jesus. He imagined that Jesus could not hear him, and never dreamt that this dissimulation was very cowardly. But his better nature soon revealed to him the fault he had committed. A fortuitous circumstance, the crowing of the cock, recalled to him a remark that Jesus had made. Touched to the heart, he went out and wept bitterly.

Hanan, although the true author of the judicial murder about to be committed, had not power to pronounce sentence upon Jesus; he sent him to his son-in-law, Kaiapha, who bore the official title. This man, the blind instrument of his father-in-law, naturally ratified everything required of him by Hanan. The Sanhedrim was assembled at his house. The enquiry commenced; and several witnesses, well instructed beforehand, appeared before the tribunal. The fatal sentence which Jesus had really uttered: "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days," was cited by two witnesses. To blaspheme the temple of God was, by the Jewish law, equivalent to blaspheming God himself. Jesus remained silent, and refused to explain the incriminated speech. This was in general during his last moments his rule of conduct. The sentence was determined on; and they only sought for pretexts. Jesus perceived this, and did not undertake a useless defence. From the orthodox Judaism point of view he was truly a blasphemer, a destroyer of the established worship, and these crimes were punished by the law with death. With one voice, the assembly declared him guilty of a capital crime. The members of the council who had a secret *penchant* for him, were absent or did not vote. The usual frivolity of old-established

aristocracies did not permit the judges to reflect long upon the consequences of the sentence they had rendered. Human life was at that time sacrificed very lightly; the members of the Sanhedrim did not, of course, dream that their sons would have to render account to an angry posterity for the sentence pronounced with such flippant disdain.

The Sanhedrim had not the right to execute a sentence of death. But in the confusion of powers which then prevailed in Judæa, Jesus was from that moment none the less condemned. He remained the rest of the night exposed to the wicked treatment of an infamous pack of servants, who spared him no affront.

In the morning the chief priests and the elders again assembled. The question was to get Pilate to ratify the condemnation pronounced by the Sanhedrim, whose powers, since the occupation of the Romans, were no longer sufficient. The procurator was not invested, like the imperial legate, with the power of life and death. But Jesus was not a Roman citizen; it only required the authorisation of the governor in order that the sentence pronounced against him should take its course. As always happens, when a political people subjects a nation amongst which the civil and the religious laws are confounded, the Romans had been led to give to the Jewish law a sort of official support. The Roman law was not applicable to Jews. The latter remained under the canonical law which we find recorded in the Talmud, just as the Arabs in Algeria are still governed by the code of Islamism. Although neutral in religion, the Romans thus very often sanctioned penalties inflicted for religious faults. Josephus pretends, though the assertion may be doubted, that if a Roman ventured beyond the pillars which bore inscriptions forbidding pagans to advance, the Romans them-



selves would have delivered him to the Jews to be put to death.

The agents of the priests, therefore, bound Jesus and led him to the judgment-hall, which was the former palace of Herod, adjoining the Tower of Antonia. It was the morning of the day on which the Paschal lamb was to be eaten (Friday, the 14th of Nisan, our 3rd of April). The Jews would have been defiled by entering the judgment-hall, and would not have been able to share in the sacred feast, and remained without. Pilate, apprised of their presence, ascended the *bima* or tribunal, situated in the open air at the place named *Gabbatha*, or in Greek, *Lithostratos*, on account of the pavement which covered the ground.

Hardly had he been informed of the accusation, before he manifested his annoyance at being mixed up in the affair. He then shut himself up in the judgment-hall with Jesus. There a conversation took place, the precise details of which are lost, no witness having been able to repeat it to the disciples, but the tenor of which appears to have been happily conjectured by John. His narrative, in fact, is in perfect accord with what history teaches us of the respective positions of the two interlocutors.

The procurator, Pontius, surnamed Pilate, doubtless on account of the *pilum* or javelin of honour with which he or one of his ancestors was decorated, had hitherto had no relation with the new sect. Indifferent to the internal quarrels of the Jews, he only saw in all these sectarian movements the effects of disordered imaginations and bewildered brains. In general, he did not like the Jews. The Jews on their part detested him still more. They considered him harsh, scornful, and passionate, accusing him of improbable crimes.

Jerusalem, the centre of a great national fer-

mentation, was a very seditious city, and an insupportable abode for a foreigner. The enthusiasts pretended that it was a fixed design of the new procurator to abolish the Jewish law. Their narrow fanaticism, their religious hatreds, shocked that broad sentiment of justice and of civil government which the humblest Roman carried everywhere with him. All the acts of Pilate which are known to us show him to have been a good administrator. In the earlier period of the exercise of his charge he had had difficulties with those subject to him which he had solved in a very brutal manner; but it seems that on the whole he was right. The Jews must have appeared to him a very backward people; he doubtless judged them as a liberal prefect formerly judged the Bas-Bretons, who rebelled for such a simple matter as a new road, or the establishment of a school. In his best projects for the good of the country, notably in those relating to public works, he had encountered an impassable obstacle in the Law. The Law narrowed life to such a point that it was opposed to all change, and to all amelioration. The Roman structures, even the most useful ones, were on the part of zealous Jews objects of great antipathy. Two votive escutcheons with inscriptions, which he had set up at his residence, which was near the sacred precincts, provoked a still more violent storm. Pilate at first cared little for these susceptibilities; and he thus was soon seen engaged in sanguinary repressions, which afterwards culminated in his removal. The experience of so many conflicts had rendered him very prudent in his relations with an intractable people, who avenged themselves upon their governors by compelling the latter to use towards them rigorous severities. The procurator, with extreme displeasure, saw himself led to play a cruel part in this new affair, because of some new law he hated.

He knew that religious fanaticism, when it has obtained some power from civil governments, is afterwards the first to throw the responsibility upon the latter, almost accusing them of being the author of their own excesses. What could be more unjust? for the true culprit is, in such cases, the instigator!

Pilate, then, would have liked to save Jesus. Perhaps the calm and dignified attitude of the accused made an impression upon him. According to a tradition, Jesus found a supporter in the procurator's own wife. She may have seen the gentle Galilean from some window of the palace, which overlooked the courts of the temple. Perhaps she had seen him again in her dreams; and the blood of this beautiful young man, which was about to be spilt, had given her nightmare. Certain it is that Jesus found Pilate prepossessed in his favour. The governor questioned him kindly, with the desire of finding out by what means he could send him away pardoned.

The title of "King of the Jews," which Jesus had never taken upon himself, but which his enemies represented as the sum and substance of his acts and pretensions, was naturally that by which they might be able to excite the suspicions of the Roman authority. He was accused of sedition, and of being guilty of treason against the government. Nothing could be more unjust; for Jesus had always recognised the Roman empire as the established power. But conservative religious bodies are not accustomed to shrink from calumny. In spite of all his explanations, they drew certain conclusions from his teaching; they made him out to be a disciple of Judas the Gaulonite; they pretended that he forbade the payment of tribute to Cæsar. Pilate asked him if he was really the king of the Jews. Jesus did not dissimulate his belief. But the great ambiguity of speech which had been the source of his strength,

and which, after his death, was to establish his kingship, did not serve him on this occasion. An idealist, that is to say, not distinguishing the spirit from the substance, Jesus, whose words, to use the image of the Apocalypse, were as a two-edged sword, never completely satisfied the powers of earth. If we may believe John, he did avow his royalty, but coupled it with this profound sentence: "My kingdom is not of this world." Then he explained the nature of his kingdom, which consisted entirely in the possession and proclamation of truth. Pilate knew nothing of this grand idealism. Jesus doubtless appeared to him as being an inoffensive dreamer. The total absence of religious and philosophical proselytism among the Romans of this epoch made them regard devotion to truth as a chimera. Such discussions annoyed them, and appeared to them devoid of meaning. Not perceiving the element of danger to the empire that lay hidden in these new speculations, they had no reason to employ violence against them. All their displeasure fell upon those who asked them to inflict punishment for vain subtleties. Twenty years after, Gallio still followed the same course towards the Jews. Until the fall of Jerusalem, the rule which the Romans adopted in administration, was to remain completely indifferent to the quarrels these sectarians had among themselves.

An expedient suggested itself to the mind of the governor by which he could reconcile his own feelings with the demands of the fanatical people, whose resentment he had already so often felt. It was the custom to deliver a prisoner to the people at the time of the Passover. Pilate, knowing that Jesus had only been arrested in consequence of the jealousy of the priests, tried to obtain for him the benefit of this custom. He appeared again upon the *bima*, and proposed to the multitude to

release the "King of the Jews." The proposition made in these terms, though ironical, was characterised by a degree of liberality. The priests saw the danger of it. They acted promptly, and in order to combat the proposition of Pilate, they suggested to the crowd the name of a prisoner who enjoyed great popularity in Jerusalem. By a singular coincidence, he also was called Jesus, and bore the surname of Bar-Abba, or Bar-Rabban. He was a well-known personage, and had been arrested for being mixed up in a disturbance, which had been accompanied by murder. A general clamour was raised, "Not this man, but Jesus Bar-Rabban;" and Pilate was obliged to release Jesus Bar-Rabban.

His embarrassment increased. He feared that too much indulgence to a prisoner, to whom was given the title of "King of the Jews," might compromise him. Fanaticism, moreover, constrains all powers to make terms with it. Pilate felt himself obliged to make some concession; but, still hesitating to shed blood, in order to satisfy men whom he detested, wished to turn the thing into a jest. Affecting to laugh at the pompous title they had given to Jesus, he caused him to be scourged. Flagellation was the usual preliminary of crucifixion. Perhaps Pilate wished it to be believed that this sentence had already been pronounced, hoping that the preliminary would suffice. Then took place, according to all the narratives, a revolting scene. The soldiers put a scarlet robe on the back of Jesus, the officers a crown of thorny branches upon his head, and a reed in his hand. Thus attired, he was led to the tribunal in front of the people. The soldiers defiled before him, striking him in turn, and knelt to him, saying, "Hail! King of the Jews." Others, it is said, spat upon him, and bruised his head with the reed. It is difficult to understand

that Roman dignity could lend itself to acts so shameful. True, Pilate, in the capacity of procurator, had scarcely any but auxiliary troops under his command. Roman citizens, as the legionaries were, would not have stooped to such indignities.

Did Pilate think by this display to shield himself from responsibility? Did he hope to turn aside the blow which threatened Jesus by conceding something to the hatred of the Jews, and by substituting for the tragic *dénouement* a grotesque termination, whence it would seem to follow that the affair merited no other issue? If such were his idea, it did not succeed. The tumult increased, and became an actual riot. The cry "Crucify him! Crucify him!" resounded on all sides. The priests, assuming a tone of more and more urgency, declared the law to be in peril if the corrupter were not punished with death. Pilate saw clearly that, in order to save Jesus, he would have to put down a furious riot. He still tried, however, to gain time. He returned to the judgment-hall, and ascertained from what country Jesus came, seeking a pretext to free him from adjudicating. According to one tradition, he even sent Jesus to Antipas, who, it is said, was then at Jerusalem. Jesus encouraged but little these benevolent efforts: he maintained, as he had done at the house of Kāiapha, a grave and dignified silence which astonished Pilate. The cries from without became more and more menacing. The people had already begun to denounce the lack of zeal of the functionary who shielded an enemy of Cæsar. The greatest adversaries of the Roman rule were found to be transformed into loyal subjects of Tiberius, so as to have the right of accusing the too tolerant procurator of treason. "We have no king," said they, "but Cæsar. If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar." The feeble

Pilate yielded; he foresaw the report that his enemies would send to Rome, in which they would accuse him of having favoured a rival of Tiberius. Already the Jews, in the matter of the votive escutcheons, had written to the emperor, and their action had been approved. He feared for his office. By a compliance, which was to hold up his name to the lash of history, he yielded, throwing, it is said, all the responsibility of what was about to happen upon the Jews. The latter, according to the Christians, fully accepted it, by exclaiming, "His blood be upon us and on our children!"

Were these words really uttered? It is open to doubt. Nevertheless they are the expression of a profound historical truth. Considering the attitude which the Romans had taken up in Judæa, Pilate could scarcely have acted otherwise than he did. How many sentences of death dictated by religious intolerance have forced the hand of the civil power! The king of Spain, who, in order to please a fanatical clergy, delivered hundreds of his subjects to the stake, was more blameable than Pilate, for he was the representative of a more absolute power than were the Romans at Jerusalem. When the civil power becomes persecuting or meddlesome at the solicitation of the priesthood, it demonstrates its weakness. But let the government that is without sin in this respect throw the first stone at Pilate. The "secular arm," behind which clerical cruelty shelters itself, is not the culprit. No one is justified in saying that he has a horror of blood when he causes it to be shed by his servants.

It was, then, neither Tiberius nor Pilate who condemned Jesus. It was the old Jewish party; it was the Mosaic Law. According to our modern ideas, there is no transmission of moral demerit from father to son; each one has to account to human or divine justice except for that which he

himself has done. Consequently, every Jew who suffers to-day for the murder of Jesus has a right to complain, for he might have been a Simon the Cyrenean, or at least, have not been one of those who cried, "Crucify him!" But nations, like individuals, have their responsibilities. Now, if ever a crime was the crime of a nation, it was the death of Jesus. This death was "legal" in the sense that it was primarily caused by a law which was the very soul of the nation. The Mosaic law, it is true, in its modern, yet accepted form, pronounced the penalty of death against all attempts to change the established worship. Now, there is no doubt that Jesus attacked this worship, and hoped to destroy it. The Jews expressed this to Pilate with truthful simplicity: "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die; because he has made himself the Son of God." The law was detestable, but it was the law of ancient ferocity; and the hero who attempted to abrogate it, had first of all to endure its penalty.

Alas! it has taken more than eighteen hundred years for the blood that he shed to bear its fruits. For ages tortures and death have been inflicted in the name of Jesus, on thinkers as noble as himself. Even to-day, in countries which call themselves Christian, penalties are pronounced for religious derelictions. Jesus is not responsible for these errors. He could not foresee that people, with mistaken imaginations, would one day imagine him as a frightful Moloch, greedy of burnt victims. Christianity has been intolerant, but intolerance is not essentially a Christian monopoly. It is Jewish in the sense that it was Judaism which first raised the theory of the absolute in religion, and laid down the principle that every innovator, even if he brings miracles in support of his doctrine, ought without trial to be stoned. The pagan world has as un-



doubtedly also had its religious violences. But if it had had this law, how would it have become Christian? The Pentateuch has thus in the world been the first code of religious terrorism. Judaism has given the example of an immutable dogma armed with the sword. If, instead of pursuing the Jews with a blind hatred, Christianity had abolished the order of things which killed its founder, how much more consistent would it not have been?—how much better would it not have deserved of the human race!

## CHAPTER XXII.

### DEATH OF JESUS.

ALTHOUGH the real motive for the death of Jesus was entirely religious, his enemies had succeeded, in the judgment-hall, in representing him as guilty of treason against the state; they could not have obtained from the sceptical Pilate a condemnation simply on the ground of heterodoxy. Following up this idea, the priests demanded, through the people, the crucifixion of Jesus. This punishment was not of Jewish origin. If the condemnation of Jesus had been purely Mosaic, he would have been stoned. Crucifixion was a Roman punishment, reserved for slaves, and for cases in which it was wished to add to death the aggravation of ignominy. In applying it to Jesus, they treated him as they treated highway robbers, brigands, bandits, or those enemies of inferior rank to whom the Romans did not grant the honour of death by the sword. It was the chimerical "King of the Jews," not the

heterodox dogmatist, for which he was punished. Following out the same idea, the execution was left to the Romans. We know that amongst the Romans, the soldiers, their profession being to kill, performed the office of executioners. Jesus was therefore delivered to a cohort of auxiliary troops, and all the odious accessories connected with executions, introduced by the cruel customs of the new conquerors, were practised upon him. It was about noon. They re-clothed him with the garments which they had removed on arraigning him before the tribunal, and as the cohort had already in reserve two thieves who were to be executed, the three convicts were bound together, and the procession set out for the place of execution.

This was a locality called Golgotha, situated outside Jernsalem, but near the walls of the city. The name *Golgotha* signifies a *skull*; it seems to correspond to the French word *Chaumont*, and probably designated a bare hill, having the form of a bald skull. Where this hill was situated is not exactly known. Certainly it was on the north or north-west of the city, on the high irregular plateau which extends between the walls and the two valleys of Kedron and Hinnom—a rather unattractive region, and rendered still more repulsive by the objectionable circumstances that always characterize the neighbourhood of a great city. It is difficult to identify Golgotha with the spot that, since Constantine, has been venerated by all Christendom. This spot is too near the interior of the city, and we are led to believe that, in the time of Jesus, it was comprised within the circuit of the walls.

Any one condemned to the cross, was himself forced to carry the instrument of his execution. But Jesus, physically weaker than his two companions, was not able to carry his. The troop met a certain Simon of Cyrene, who was returning from the

country, and the soldiers, with the off-hand procedure of foreign garrisons, obliged him to carry the fatal tree. In so doing they perhaps exercised a recognised right to enforce labour, the Romans not being allowed to carry the infamous wood. It seems that Simon was afterwards a ruler of the Christian community; in which his two sons, Alexander and Rufus, were so well known. He related perhaps more than one circumstance of which he had been witness. No disciple was at this moment near to Jesus.

The place of execution was at length reached. According to Jewish usage, the victims were offered a strong aromatic wine, an intoxicating drink, which, from a feeling of pity, was given to the condemned to stupefy him. It appears that the women of Jerusalem often brought this stupefying wine to the unfortunates who were being led to execution; when there was none presented by the latter it was purchased at the expense of the public treasury. Jesus, after having touched the rim of the cup with his lips, refused to drink. This sad consolation of common sufferers did not accord with his exalted nature. He preferred to quit life with perfect clearness of mind, and to await in full consciousness the death he had willed and brought upon himself. He was then divested of his garments, and fastened to the cross. The cross was composed of two beams, tied in the form of the letter T. It was so little raised, that the feet of the condemned almost touched the earth. They commenced by securing it; they next fastened the sufferer to it by driving nails into his hands; the feet were often nailed, occasionally bound with cords. A piece of wood was fastened to the shaft of the cross, near the centre, and passed between the legs of the condemned, who rested on it. Failing this, the hands would have been torn and the body would have sunk down. At

other times, a small horizontal rest was fixed at the elevation of the feet, and supported them.

Jesus experienced these horrors in all their atrocity. A burning thirst, one of the tortures of crucifixion, consumed him. He asked to drink. Near him there was a cup full of the ordinary drink of the Roman soldiers, a mixture of vinegar and water, called *posca*. The soldiers had to carry with them their *posca* on all their expeditions, amongst which executions were reckoned. A soldier dipped a sponge in this mixture, put it on the end of a reed, and raised it to the lips of Jesus, who sucked it. Two thieves were crucified, one on each side. The executioners, to whom were usually left the small effects of the victims, drew lots for his garments, and, sitting at the foot of the cross, guarded him. According to one tradition, Jesus uttered this sentence, which was at least in his heart if not upon his lips: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

According to the Roman custom, a writing was affixed to the head of the cross, bearing, in three languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, the words: "THE KING OF THE JEWS." There was in this inscription something painful and insulting to the nation. Those who passed by and read it were offended. The priests complained to Pilate that he ought to have made use of an inscription which implied simply that Jesus had called himself King of the Jews. But Pilate, already tired of the whole affair, refused to change what had been written.

The disciples of Jesus had fled. But his faithful Galilean friends, who had followed him to Jerusalem and continued to serve him, had not forsaken him. Mary Cleophas, Mary Magdalen, Joanna, wife of Khouza, Salome, and others stood off at a certain distance, never losing sight of him.

Apart from this small group of women, whose

presence consoled him, Jesus had before him only the spectacle of the baseness or stupidity of humanity. The passers-by insulted him. He heard around him foolish scoffs, and his greatest cries of pain turned into odious jests: "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. He saved others," they said again; "himself he cannot save. If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him! Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself." Some, vaguely acquainted with his apocalyptic ideas, thought they heard him call Elias, and said, "Let us see whether Elias will come to save him." It appears that the two crucified thieves at his side also insulted him. The sky was dark; and the earth, as in all the environs of Jerusalem, dry and gloomy. For a moment, according to certain narratives, his heart failed him; a cloud hid from him the face of his Father; he experienced an agony of despair a thousand times more acute than all his tortures. He saw only the ingratitude of men. Repenting perhaps in suffering for a vile race, he exclaimed: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But his divine instinct still sustained him. In proportion as the life of the body eked out, his soul became clear, returning by degrees to its celestial origin. The object of his mission returned: he saw in his death the salvation of the world; he lost sight of the hideous spectacle spread at his feet, and, irrevocably united to his Father, he began upon the gibbet the divine life which was to enter into the heart of humanity for all eternity.

The peculiar atrocity of crucifixion was that one could live three or four days in this horrible state upon the instrument of torture. The bleeding from the hands soon stopped, and was not fatal. The

real cause of death was the unnatural position of the body, which brought on a frightful disturbance of the circulation, terrible pains in the head and heart, and, finally, rigidity of the limbs. Victims with strong constitutions died simply of hunger. The original idea of this cruel punishment was not directly to kill the culprit by positive injuries, but to expose the slave, nailed by the hand of which he had neglected to make a good use, and to let him rot on the wood. The delicate organization of Jesus preserved him from this slow agony. Everything tends to show that the instantaneous rupture of a vessel in the heart killed him, at the end of three hours. A few moments before giving up the ghost, his voice was still strong. Suddenly he uttered a terrible cry, which some heard as: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!" but which others, more intent on the accomplishment of prophecies, rendered, "It is finished!" His head fell upon his breast, and he expired.

Rest now in thy glory, noble founder. Thy work is completed; thy divinity is established. Henceforth, stripped of all frailty, thou shalt aid, by the exaltation of thy divine peace, the infinite fruits of thy acts. At the cost of a few hours of suffering, which have not even tinged thy great soul, thou hast purchased the most complete immortality. During thousands of years, the world will extol thee. Ensign of our contradictions, thou wilt be the standard around which will be fought the fiercest battles. A thousand times more living, a thousand times more loved since thy death than during the days of thy pilgrimage here below, thou wilt become so completely the corner-stone of humanity, that to tear thy name from this world would be to shake it to its foundations. Between thee and God, men will no longer distinguish. Complete vanquisher of death, take possession of thy kingdom, whither shall

follow thee by the royal road thou hast traced, ages of adorers.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### ESSENTIAL CHARACTER OF THE WORK OF JESUS.

JESUS, it is seen, never extended his action beyond the Jewish circle. Although his sympathy for outcasts of heterodoxy led him to admit pagans into the kingdom of God, although he had more than once resided in a pagan country, and although once or twice we surprise him in kindly relations with unbelievers, it may be said that his life was passed entirely in the small world in which he was born. In Greek or Roman countries he was never heard of; his name only appears in profane authors of a hundred years later, and then in an indirect manner, in connection with seditious movements provoked by his doctrine, or persecutions of which his disciples were the object. Even on the heart of Judaism, Jesus made no very durable impression. Philo, who died about the year 50, knew nothing of him. Josephus, born in the year 37, and writing at the close of the century, mentions his execution in a few lines, as an event of secondary importance, while in the enumeration of the sects of his time, he omits the Christians altogether. Even the *Mishnah* affords no trace of the new school. The passages in the two Gemaras in which the founder of Christianity is named, do not carry us back beyond the fourth or fifth century. The essential work of Jesus was to form around him a circle of disciples, whom he inspired with boundless affection, and in whose breasts he deposited the germ of his doctrine. To

have made himself beloved, "to the extent that after his death they ceased not to love him," was the great work of Jesus, and that which most struck his contemporaries. His doctrine was a thing so little dogmatic, that he neither thought of writing it, nor of having it written. Men did not become his disciples by believing this or that, but by attaching themselves to his person and by loving him. A few sentences easily revoked from the memory, and especially his type of character, and the impression it had left, were what remained of him. Jesus was not a founder of dogmas, or a deviser of symbols; he introduced into the world a new spirit. The least Christianised of men were, on the one hand, the doctors of the Greek Church, who, from the fourth century, began to entangle Christianity in a labyrinth of puerile metaphysical discussions, and, on the other, the scholastics of the Latin Middle Ages, who wished to draw from the Gospel the thousands of articles of a colossal system. To adhere to Jesus with the kingdom of God in prospect was what at first entitled one to be called a Christian.

It will now be understood why, by an exceptional destiny, pure Christianity still presents, after eighteen centuries, the character of a universal and eternal religion. It is because the religion of Jesus is, in truth, in some respects, the final religion. The right of all men to participate in the kingdom of God has been proclaimed by Jesus. Thanks to Jesus, the prerogatives of conscience, apart from political edicts, have succeeded in establishing a new power, namely, the "spiritual power." That power has more than once belied its origin. For centuries the bishops have been its princes, and the Pope its king. The pretended empire of souls has at various times shown itself to be nothing but a frightful tyranny, not hesitating to employ, in order to maintain itself, torture and



butchery. But the day will come when separation will bear its fruits, when the domain of matters pertaining to the mind will cease to be called a "power," and assume the title of "liberty." Having its origin in the conscience of a man of the people, budding forth in the sight of the people, loved and admired first by the people, Christianity was stamped with an original character which nothing can ever efface. It was the first triumph of revolution, the first victory of popular sentiment, the advent of guileless hearts, the inauguration of a well-being which the people understood. Jesus thus opened a breach in the aristocratic societies of antiquity through which every one can pass.

The civil power, in fact, though quite innocent of the death of Jesus (it only countersigned the sentence against its will) has had silently to bear the responsibility. A legend, charged with all sorts of blasphemies, was circulated and made the round of the world—in which the constituted authorities played a most ignoble part, and in which the accused is justified, in which the judges and the civil power have leagued themselves together against the truth. Seditious in the highest degree, the history of the Passion, circulated by means of thousands of popular representations, pointed to the Roman eagles as sanctioning one of the most iniquitous of executions, one carried out by Roman soldiers, and at the behest of a Roman governor. What a blow struck at all established powers! These have, in fact, never recovered from it. How is it, then, that these poor people assume, in this particular, airs of infallibility, when they bear upon their consciences the great scorn of Gethsemane?

Christianity, the product of a spontaneous movement of perfect souls, freed at its inception from all dogmatic restraints, and having struggled three hundred years for liberty of conscience, reaps still,

despite the reverses it has encountered, the fruits of this excellent origin. In order to renew itself it has only to return to the gospel. The kingdom of God, such as we conceive it, differs materially from the supernatural apparition that early Christians hoped to see appear in the clouds. But the sentiment which Jesus introduced into the world is really ours. His perfect idealism is the highest rule of a pure and virtuous life. He created a heaven of pure souls, where is to be found what we seek in vain for on earth,—the perfect nobility of the children of God, absolute holiness, total abstraction from the pollutions of this world; in fine, liberty, which society eschews as an impossibility, and which can only find full scope in the domain of mind. The great Master of those who take refuge in this ideal kingdom of God is still Jesus. He was the first to proclaim the sovereignty of the mind; the first to say, at least through his acts: "My kingdom is not of this world." The foundation of true religion is verily his work. Since him, it only remains to fructify and develope it.

"Christianity" has thus become almost synonymous with "religion." All that one may attempt, outside this grand and noble Christian tradition, is futile. Jesus founded the religion of humanity, just as Socrates founded philosophy, and Aristotle science. There was philosophy before Socrates, and science before Aristotle. But since the times of Socrates and Aristotle philosophy and science have made immense progress; yet it has all been reared upon the foundations they laid down. Similarly, before Jesus religion had passed through many revolutions; since Jesus it has achieved great conquests; yet we have not advanced, and never will improve upon the essential principle Jesus created; he fixed for ever the idea of pure worship. The religion of Jesus in this sense is not limited. The

Church has had its epochs and its phases; it has enveloped itself in creeds which have lasted and can only last for a time: Jesus, on the other hand, has founded absolute religion, which excludes nothing, determines nothing unless it be sentiment. His creeds are not fixed dogmas, but ideas susceptible of indefinite interpretations. We should seek in vain for a theological proposition in the Gospel. All professions of faith are travesties of the idea of Jesus, just as the scholasticism of the Middle Ages, in proclaiming Aristotle the only master of a completed science, perverted the teachings of Aristotle. Aristotle, if he had taken part in the debates of the schools, would have repudiated this narrow doctrine; he would have allied himself to the party of progressive science as against the routine which shielded itself under his authority; he would have applauded his opponents. Similarly, if Jesus were to return among us, he would recognise as disciples, not those who pretend to embody his teachings in a few catechismal phrases, but those who labour as he laboured. The eternal glory, in all great things, is to lay the first stone. It may be that in modern "Physics," and "Meteorology" we may not discover a word of the treatises of Aristotle which bear these titles; but Aristotle remains no less the founder of natural natural science. Whatever may be the transformations of dogma, Jesus will ever be the creator of the pure spirit of religion; the Sermon on the Mount will never be surpassed. No matter what revolution takes place, nothing will prevent us attaching ourselves in religion to the grand intellectual and moral line at the head of which is enshrined the name of Jesus. In this sense we are Christians, even when we separate ourselves on almost all points from the Christian tradition which has preceded us.

And this great foundation was indeed the personal

work of Jesus. To make himself adored to this degree, he must have been adorable. Love is only kindled by an object worthy of it, and we should know nothing of Jesus, if it were not for the passion he inspired in those around him, which obliges us still to affirm that he was great and pure. The faith, the enthusiasm, the constancy of the first Christian generation is only explicable, on the supposition that at its inception there existed a man of transcendent greatness. Our civilisations, governed by minute restrictions, cannot give us any idea of the power of man at periods in which the originality of each one had a far freer development. Let us imagine a recluse dwelling in the mountains near our capitals, coming out from time to time in order to present himself at the palaces of sovereigns, brushing the sentinels aside, and, with an imperious tone, announcing to kings the approach of revolutions of which he had been the promoter. The bare idea provokes a smile. Yet, such was Elias; Elias the Tishbite, in our days, would not be able to pass the gate of the Tuileries. The preaching of Jesus, and his free activity in Galilee, do not deviate less completely from the social conditions to which we are accustomed. Free from our polished conventionalities, exempt from the uniform education which refines us, but which so greatly dwarfs our individuality, these mighty souls carried a surprising energy into action. They appear to us like the giants of a heroic age, which could not have been real. This is a profound error! Those men were our brothers; they were of our stature, felt and thought as we do. But the breath of God was free in them; with us, it is restrained by the iron bonds of a mean society, and condemned to an irremediable mediocrity.

Let us place, then, at the highest summit of human greatness the person of Jesus. Let us not

be led astray by sneers in the presence of a legend which keeps us always in a superhuman world. The life of Francis d'Assisi is, too, only a tissue of miracles. Has any one ever doubted, though, of his existence, and of the part he played? Let us say no more that the glory of founding Christianity belongs to the multitude of the first Christians, and not to him whom legend has deified. The inequality of men is much more marked in the East than with us. It is no rarity to see spring up there, in the midst of a general atmosphere of wickedness, characters whose greatness astorishes us. So far from Jesus having been made by his disciples, he appeared in everything superior to his disciples. The latter, St. Paul and St. John excepted, were men without invention or genius. St. Paul himself bears no comparison with Jesus, and as to St. John, such obscurity shrouds the school to which he attached himself, that we must always speak with great reserve of the personal part he played. Hence the immense superiority of the Gospels among the writings of the New Testament. Hence the painful fall we experience in passing from the history of Jesus to that of the apostles. The evangelists themselves, who have transmitted to us the image of Jesus, are so much beneath him of whom they speak, that they constantly disfigure him, not being able to attain to his height. Their writings are full of errors and contradictions. We feel in each line a discourse of divine beauty, told by narrators who do not understand it, and who substitute their own ideas for those they have only half grasped. On the whole, the character of Jesus, far from having been embellished by his biographers, has been marred by them. Criticism, in order to find what he was, needs to discard a series of errors, which prove the mediocre minds of the disciples. The latter painted him as they understood him, and

often in thinking to exalt him, they have in reality debased him.

Is it more just to say that Jesus was wholly indebted to Judaism, and that his greatness is only that of the Jewish people? No one is more disposed than myself to place high this unrivalled people, whose particular heritage seems to have been to contain amongst them the extremes of good and evil. Jesus, doubtless, sprung from Judaism; but he proceeded from it as Socrates did from the schools of the Sophists, as Luther proceeded from the Middle Ages, as Lamennais from Catholicism, as Rousseau from the eighteenth century. A man belongs to his age and race even when he reacts against his age and race. Far from continuing Judaism, Jesus represents the rupture with the Jewish spirit. The supposition that his idea in this respect could lead to equivocation, is disproved by the general direction of Christianity after him. The chief tendency of Christianity has been to separate itself more and more from Judaism. Its perfection depends on its returning to Jesus, but certainly not in returning to Judaism. The great originality of the founder remains then unchallenged; his glory does not admit of any legitimate sharer.

This sublime person, who each day still presides over the destiny of the world, may be called divine, not in the sense that Jesus has absorbed all the divine, but in the sense that Jesus is the person who has impelled his fellow-men to make the greatest step towards the divine. Humanity in its totality presents an assemblage of low beings, selfish, superior to the animal only in the single particular that its selfishness is more reflective. Still, from the midst of this uniform depravity, pillars rise towards the sky, and testify to a nobler destiny. Jesus is the highest of these pillars that show to man whence he comes, and whither he ought to tend. In him

was concentrated all that is good and elevated in our nature. He was not without sin; he had to conquer the same passions that we have to combat; no angel of God comforted him, except it was his good conscience; no Satan tempted him, more than each one bears in his heart. In the same way that many of his great qualities are lost to us, in consequence of the lack of intelligence of his disciples, it is also probable that many of his faults have been concealed. But never has any one made the interests of humanity predominate to the same extent in his life over the littlenesses of self-love. Unreservedly devoted to his idea, he subordinated everything to it to such a degree that, towards the end of his life, the universe existed no longer for him. It was by this transport of heroic will that he conquered heaven. There never was a man who so completely trampled under foot family, the pleasures of this world, and all temporal care. He lived only for his Father and the divine mission with which he believed himself charged.

What has the future in store for us? Will great originality be born again, or will the world henceforth content itself by following the paths opened by the bold original minds of antiquity? We do not know. In any case, Jesus will not be surpassed. His worship will constantly renew itself, his history will provoke endless pious tears, his sufferings will subdue the stoutest hearts; all ages will proclaim that, among the sons of men, no one has been born who is greater than Jesus.







